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THE BOSS MAGAZINE #91 FALL/WINTER 2013



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CLARENCE CLEMONS & BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

June 20, 1975 • New York, NY
Eric Meola Photo

OFF THE WALL

CLARENCE CLEMONS

Backstage in 1975
Barbara Pyle Photo

LETTERS

THE VIEW FROM ASBURY

Dear Editor:

It was shaping up to be another epic evening on the Asbury Park Boardwalk, where I was producing a pop-up art gallery/music event at Fifth and Ocean Avenues, and the house was packed. At 8:56 p.m. I received a text from a childhood friend that simply read, "Tear Drops on E Street."

I walked directly through the crowd around me, out the door toward the ocean, sat down on a bench and stared at the shimmering red moonlight on the water. The Big Man had passed, and word quickly spread through our happy party place, which now took on a different tone.

People hugged, raised their glasses to the sky, and knew they would not forget where they were when they found out that Clarence Clemons, the world ambassador of goodwill and Asbury Park, had passed.

As the event was in full swing,

I stepped back onto the boardwalk for a solitary smoke when I heard the unmistakable sound of bagpipers coming from the Grand Arcade inside Convention Hall. As I moved closer, I made out that they were playing "Amazing Grace." My lips quivered and my eyes, which had been welling up for 20 minutes, now spilled over with tears.

With two hours left in our party (now a raging Irish Wake: four kegs, ten cases of wine, in four hours) I put on a brave face and finished the now-bittersweet evening. At 2 a.m., walking home back to downtown Asbury Park, we stopped in front of the Stone Pony, where a memorial had already popped up.

I stood on Second Avenue, looking a block west to 911 Kingsley, the spot where the Big Man met The Boss on that stormy night in 1971, as the past, the present, and the thoughts of an E Street future overwhelmed me.

Sitting on the porch at 3:30 in the morning, I thought of his handshake, his huge two hands enveloping my one puny one and the warm tenderness of those

hands. You felt the transference of his energy. You felt the light inside of him.

Now and forever, that light is inside of us all. The tenderness, the warmth, that soul is felt every time you hear that horn or think of that smile. God bless the Big Man.

Tim Donnelly
Asbury Park, NJ

SURF & SOUL

Dear Editor:

It was touching having my letter and pictures of Danny and I flying around in his plane published in the magazine [*Backstreets* #88].

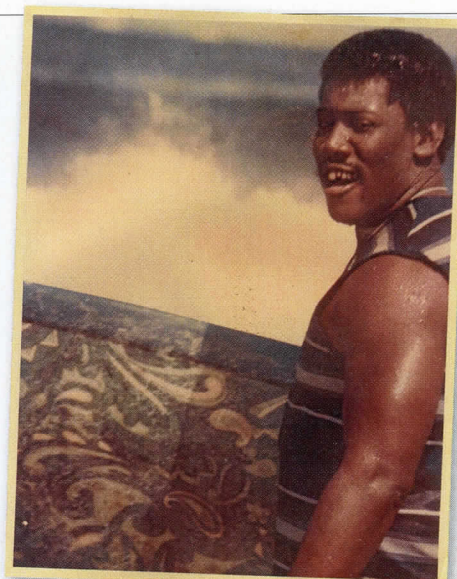
You should enjoy this shot of Clarence during one of our surf sessions. This picture was taken across the street from my surf shop called The Islanders, in North Long Branch, NJ. Some of the E Street Band lived together behind the shop back in the early days, where Vini Lopez,

Danny and Clarence were actually roommates.

Clarence really was, as Bruce has said, "The Kahuna of Surf and Soul." We even surfed at night one time. In this shot we couldn't believe he lost the cap on his front tooth. Ha!

Back then we were stoked, striving for our dreams. Great memories.

Vince Troniec
Allenhurst, NJ



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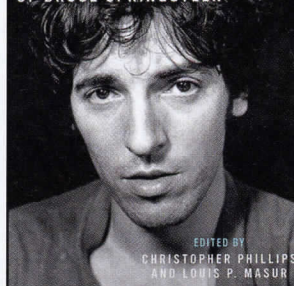
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TALK ABOUT A DREAM

THE ESSENTIAL INTERVIEWS
OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN



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From the editor of *Backstreets* and the author of *Runaway Dream: Born to Run and Bruce Springsteen's American Vision*, collecting 40 years of interviews, from 1973-2013. As Peter Ames Carlin writes, "Talk About a Dream describes the life of Bruce Springsteen in the inimitable words of the man who knows it best: Bruce Springsteen."

"Chris and Lou have compiled interviews with Bruce that span his entire recording career. . . A must-read for all serious Bruceaholics." —GARRY TALLENT

"An absolute must for Springsteen fans."

—JUNE SKINNER SAWYERS, editor, *Racing in the Street*

"Talk About a Dream charts Springsteen's journey from 'sullen mumbler' to one of the more articulate rock stars, nay cultural commentators, today; and in a manner verging on the definitive." —CLINTON HEYLIN, author of *E Street Shuffle*

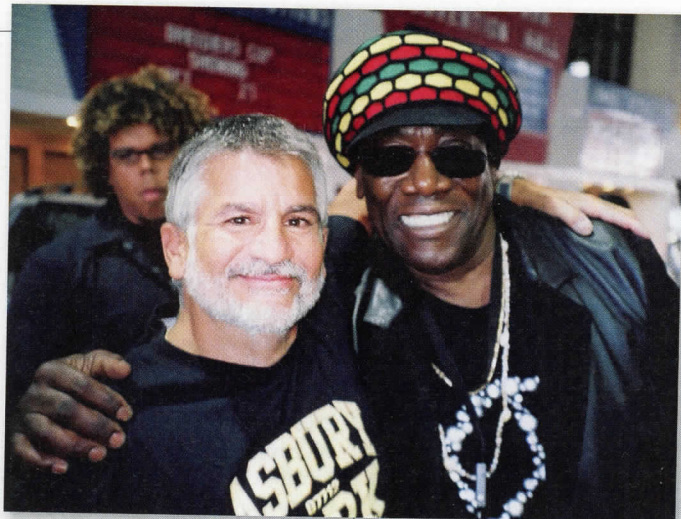
"No artist has ever been as candid, informative, and entertaining as Bruce is in this wonderful book, *Talk About a Dream*. As revealing as you could possibly hope. I highly recommend it." —NILS LOFGREN

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THE PROMISE

Dear Editor:

In 2007, I went to two rehearsals at Convention Hall in Asbury Park, where I was able to get this picture taken of Clarence Clemons and me. The first night, he only took one photo; I asked him for one, and he just said, "Tomorrow." So the next day I went back, and out of about 20 fans, he pointed me out and posed for this picture. One of the staff told me, "Clarence always remembers, and he always keeps his promises."

The following year, he autographed the photo for me. What a wonderful person he was. His hands were gigantic. His heart was bigger.

Ross Pantone
Manahawkin, NJ

DOUBTS DOWN UNDER

Dear Editor:

As a former Californian, now full-time Brisbane resident, I had some serious trepidation regarding the announcement of the conflict of Stevie's *Lilyhammer* schedule with the 2012 Australian dates. We felt a bit "had," in that the announcement of Tom Morello was not made until well after the tickets had already been sold.

We had purchased tickets not only for all of the Brisbane shows but for three in Sydney as well; with the news of a Miami no-show, we felt shattered. For a few days we went through scenarios: we could sell the tickets, or at least minimize the number of shows, and maybe even go back to the promoting company to say, "Look, this was not presented properly—we want our

money back." Extreme, maybe, but this was billed as Bruce and the E Street Band.

After some clearing of the head, I began to do a bit of research on Morello. We knew he had done guest appearances with Bruce, and the news was encouraging: his guitar-wielding ability was clearly noteworthy.

But how do you replace Steven's decades of experience, not to mention the bevy of songs that Bruce reaches for at any given moment? Who's gonna shout "Yeah, yeah, yeah" on "Prove It All Night"? There was no way Tom could fill those shoes. No way.

After some serious discussion, we decided to go through with it, figuring our tickets for later shows would be sellable if things did not go well.

Not only did we not sell those tickets, these were likely some of the finest Springsteen shows I have ever seen. I was having Winterland flashbacks. The performance level and energy level were so high... you could see nearly everyone looking around like, "Are you serious? Did he just

play 'Incident,' 'Racing,' and 'The River' in the same show?"

Morello's participation—and as importantly, Bruce's ability to integrate him into the band and roll with it—transformed E Street, taking it to a whole new level. Truly amazing shows.

Bruce, thank you for all your gifts—we will never doubt you again. My vote: keep Tom and Stevie, put them both in the band!

Frank Mercurio
Brisbane, Australia

Frank, you're actually getting your wish—for the 2014 return to Oz, at least. Bet you'll be keeping all of your tickets this time, too. —Ed.

BROTHERHOOD

Dear Editor:

There is so much to remember and retell about the Big Man. I was so honored to be there during some of the band's earlier years. I'll never forget his presence on stage and the love he gave to his audience and fans. I wanted to pass on to you and your readers this shot, as it's always been one of my favorites. It's from the legendary Harvard Square Theatre performance, May 9, 1974—the show Jon Landau reviewed in his now-famous *Real Paper* article. There's something in this shot that reflects, for me, their brotherhood on stage: Clarence, focused, doing his thing, and Bruce, eyes closed, totally in the moment. The moment was "New York City Serenade." They were there for each other. It was beauty then, and it will be beauty forever.

Barry Schneier
Holliston, MA



the backstreets jukebox

1. Bruce Springsteen
Wrecking Ball
Columbia (2LP)

2. The Replacements
Toronto, 8/25/13
fan-based recording (mp3)

3. Arcade Fire
Reflektor
Merge (2LP)

4. Jason Isbell
Southeastern
Southeastern (LP)

5. Various Artists
Titan: It's All Pop!
Numero Group (4LP)

6. Bear in Heaven
I Love You It's Cool
Hometapes (LP)

7. Pearl Jam
Lightning Bolt
Monkeywrench (CD)

8. George Jones
Memories of Us / The Battle
Koch (CD)

9. Superchunk
I Hate Music
Merge (LP)

10. Martyn Joseph
Tires Rushing By in the Rain
Pipe (CD)

10 records
that helped make
this issue possible

The long train stopped in Buffalo

A Massive Loss

By Charles R. Cross

At the memorial service for Clarence Clemons, Bruce Springsteen eloquently stated that Clarence didn't leave the E Street Band when he died—"he leaves when we die." Despite the beauty of those words, the loss of Clarence still seems hard to fathom, at least to this fan. Even as we've now witnessed an entire tour without the Big Man, it still feels impossible to imagine the E Street Band without him.

Whether it was his "Jungleland" solo or the lovely work he did on "Secret Garden," Clarence's musical touch was impossible to ignore, live or on record. And while most will remember the blaring solos on "Badlands" or "Rosalita," there were also many smaller touches he added, the maracas or background vocals. When Clarence did solo on a song, that solo became one the cornerstones of the track, cemented in history.

By any standard, Clarence was a main visual element of the stage show, many times casting an onstage shadow that dwarfed Springsteen. He was an icon of sorts, and he often was onstage in an iconographic pose, whether he was playing sax, or just leaning to the side waiting for his part. Clarence could turn a lean into a work of extreme sardonic understatement: he often said much by saying very little. When he did chime in for a vocal part onstage, his deep voice echoed off the back rafters.

It is true that during the last decade of E Street shows, Clarence's onstage role was slightly diminished, due to his physical struggles. It pained any fan to watch Clarence hobble onstage, or to see him take a golf cart from his dressing room. His 2009 autobiography detailed struggles that were greater than I had initially realized. He was in a lot of pain, a lot of the time, but it wasn't always obvious to a fan in the stands. When he was there onstage, he was present,

and he often was smiling. And anytime you were around him offstage, you would rarely hear a complaint, or a whine. He was big in spirit, too.

But Clarence's later struggles with hips and knees were only a small part of the story, and truly a footnote. In the early years, he was a lithe dancer, and one who had rhythm. For a big, big

Clarence appeared to be a Goliath, a colossus that could not be toppled. I couldn't conceive of a day when he'd no longer be on Bruce's right.

man, he was surprisingly light on his feet, and before I knew the story of what the "E Street Shuffle" was about, I mistakenly thought it was named after the little dance Clarence did during that song.

The first few times I saw the band, knowing nothing about each player or their history, Clarence entranced me nearly as much as Bruce. He seemed exotic, unknowable, and hypnotic when he was onstage. One hot night in August 1975, at the Mosque in Richmond, Virginia, Clarence flipped his head and I was showered with his sweat. It seemed to be a christening of sorts, part of the initiation for any fan who dared push their way to the edge of the stage.

In the wake of Clarence's death, many of the tributes mentioned his oversize personality, and his musical accomplishments. One thing not noted as much was the groundbreaking role he played being an African-American in the predominantly white world of rock 'n' roll. It was not always an easy task, but Clarence was not one to be told

he couldn't do anything, or to not cross a barrier. Springsteen acknowledged racism in his eulogy, noting that "size and celebrity" did not make Clarence immune to prejudice.

Clarence's decision to join up with a bunch of skinny white guys was, in many ways, a rejection of the distinct color lines in music in the day, particularly in Asbury Park. Clarence turned the E Street Band into an integrated band in an era when that description had political ramifications still. It occasionally put the band at odds with racist club owners, but it also contributed, in no small way, to a sense that the larger genre of '70s rock could be freed from some of the previous decade's rigid confines. Clarence wasn't the only African-American in the E Street Band—David Sancious and Boom Carter were also part of the mix early on. But because Clarence was such a part of the public face of the E Street Band, that face now had multiple colors. There was a time when that mattered, even to people who never saw the band, or bought a single record.

Clarence also brought a sense of humor to the band that wasn't there without him. Despite the light things that Springsteen has been saying onstage since the mid-'90s, Bruce was a very serious guy when he began, and without an onstage foil, who was at times comedic, the show might not have rolled as much as it rocked. Clarence looked serious often, but he was a crack-up behind that exterior, and if he were involved in any kind of escapade, onstage or off, there would be a Marx Brothers-like element to it. Clarence had a massive smile, and he had a scary frown, and he could use both in the course of one song.

That prankster sense was something Clarence shared with Danny Federici, his one-time roommate. Despite the notable physical differences between the men, both told funny stories, and they had the ability to laugh at

themselves. They were also both invested in keeping the band legends alive, particularly the wacky stories of the wacky days. And in that way they do both live on, because many of those stories continue to grow even with the storytellers gone.

Danny's death also felt like a huge emotional loss, and an emotional fracturing. But if there was anything that softened that blow, it was how valiantly Danny fought his disease for so long. The courage Danny showed in facing death reminded us to live, and not let mourning consume us.

Clarence's death feels different, perhaps because of the suddenness of it, but also because Clarence never really seemed to live in the same human world that anyone else did. His size, his smile, his passion for life, and the joy with which he approached everything, gave him the air of immortality. He appeared to be a Goliath, a colossus that could not be toppled. And even watching his struggles with physical issues, and reading of his multiple surgeries in his biography, I think that I, like many fans, still couldn't conceive of a day when he'd no longer be on Bruce's right.

There is a photograph of Clarence with his shirt off flexing his biceps that I kept going back to look at again and again in the wake of Clarence's death. It's an Eric Meola outtake from the *Born to Run* sessions. Clarence's arm at that point, in 1975, was larger in girth than my waistline. He's huge all over, and most of him is muscle.

I kept staring at that photo in the hours after hearing of Clarence's death, and it just didn't seem real that a muscle—both a human, and a musical muscle—that powerful could be gone. But it is.

And in an instant, it seemed that the long train of the E Street Band, that core E Street Band with Clarence front and stage right in the first car, was no more. The long train stopped in Buffalo. 🐘

See you in the next life

Can You Feel the Spirit?

By Christopher Phillips

Bruce said it, Charley repeated it, and I will, too: "Clarence doesn't leave the E Street Band when he dies. He leaves when we die." Bruce said it, and on the tour that followed, he went on to prove it. Conjugating Clarence on a nightly basis, in 2012 and 2013 we spent a good bit of time communing with old ghosts, feeling them around us, and being reminded by Springsteen, "If you're here... and we're here... they're here."

Of course, Charley's right—the E Street Band as we knew it is no more. It has changed—it had to—and morphed into something new. Call it the E Street Orchestra, what we've seen onstage following the deaths of Danny Federici and Clarence Clemons has been an evolution motivated by necessity. But thanks to Springsteen's artistry, his instincts, his heart, he managed to pick up the rock and carry it on without leaving anything else in the dust. Moving forward in the great wake of the Big Man's death—the question being "How do I begin again?"—it's hard to see a misstep even in retrospect: keeping the rest of the band together (remember when we thought Bruce might tour solo instead?); showing so much faith in Jake Clemons (faith clearly rewarded); bolstering the E Street Choir with Everett Bradley and Michelle Moore; mustering an army of horn players to fill the empty air; joining the crowd to watch that video salute with us... night after night, invoking the missing so that we missed them a little less. "If you're here... and we're here... they're here."

That felt more real to me than some vague notion like "If we keep them in our hearts, they'll never truly be gone." That wasn't the idea. The idea was, "They're here." It's something that Bruce first put out there at the end of the *Wrecking Ball* album. Before he asked the Apollo Theatre



crowd if they were missing anybody, before he asked "the spirits to come back and speak to the living" in New Orleans, before he spoke of "the ghosts that walk alongside us" as "traveling companions," he sang "We Are Alive." He doesn't sing, "We Are Inspiring to You As Long as You Remember Us"... he sings, emphatically, "We Are Alive."

It's no accident that "We Are Alive" occupies the same closing spot on *Wrecking Ball* as "Terry's Song" on *Magic* and "The Last Carnival" on *Working on a Dream*. This one's for Clarence: not a mournful song, but a celebration of life, legacy, and work that goes on, and on, and on.

Remembering the wait for *Wrecking Ball*—just as we're now anticipating *High Hopes*—the main question on many of our minds was whether the new record would be a tribute to Clarence or a reaction to the events of the day (as if it had to be one or the other). Upon release, the album's story seemed to fall squarely within the latter: it was an "angry" record, a reaction to Wall Street greed and the Great Recession, a survey of a country and its promises. But the more we lived with *Wrecking Ball*, the more I felt the loss of Clarence in its grooves—not just in the despair of "This Depression" or the saxophone of the man himself in "Land of Hope and Dreams"—and the more I heard

whispers of Springsteen's eulogy for Clarence throughout.

We've reprinted Bruce's parting words later in this issue, but here's another passage that bears repeating. It's my favorite part of the eulogy and one that's been quoted far less often: "...we must have stood together in other, older times, along other rivers, in other cities, in other fields, doing our modest version of god's work... work that's still unfinished. So I won't say goodbye to my brother, I'll simply say, see you in the next life, further on up the road, where we will once again pick up that work, and get it done."

Bruce reminds us in "Jack of All Trades, 'It's happened before, and it'll happen again.'" And there in the last verse of "We Are Alive," he sings it out: "Alone in the blackness of my grave / Alone I'd been left to die / Then I heard voices calling all around me / The earth rose above me, my eyes filled with sky / ...Our souls and spirits rise / To carry the fire and light the spark / ...To stand shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart / We are alive." And god's work continues.

So as the E Street Band soldiered on, playing this one, it wasn't just old bones from 1877 or 1963 they were singing to life—squint and you could see Danny and Clarence up there, too. And I like to think these lines in particular were just for

C: "Let your mind rest easy, sleep well my friend / It's only our bodies that betray us in the end."

In this issue, fittingly one of our biggest ever, we finally present our tribute to the Big Man, which occupies more than half of these pages. It's been a privilege to speak and work with so many of Clarence's friends and colleagues, and I'm grateful for the help of many of our contributors (Bob Santelli chief among them) and the images from so many brilliant photographers, all of whom stepped right up. Delays were mine, not theirs; sincere thanks to everyone for hanging tight during such a long wait between issues, with several false endings. If you note a smaller E Street contingent compared with our tribute to Danny, it says absolutely nothing about how much we value their memories and more about, to be frank, my disinclination to ask them to talk again so soon about another friend lost. It also seemed particularly appropriate, for a man with so many loves, who traveled in so many circles, who touched so many lives, to try and show as many of those facets here as we could. Another 65 pages and we'd still never capture it all... but we had to draw the line somewhere. In many ways I'll miss working on this—poring over images, recalling what made the Big Man so big, feeling his spirit day after day. I hope that, at least somewhere in these pages, you feel some of Clarence's spirit, too—that you find him here.

And just as I finish writing these words, news comes over the wire that the legendary E Street Band—finally, finally—will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2014. They'll stand shoulder to shoulder with each other, with Springsteen, with the greats that came before them and the greats that come after them. Clarence won't be standing on that stage in Brooklyn in April. But believe it, he'll still be there that night, and every one that follows. 🐉

18th studio album due 1/14

January Brings *High Hopes*

By Caryn Rose

As announced Thanksgiving week, Bruce Springsteen's 18th studio album, *High Hopes*, will be released on Columbia Records on January 14. The 12-song record consists of three covers ("High Hopes," "Just Like Fire Would," and "Dream Baby Dream"), two re-recorded tracks ("American Skin (41 Shots)" and "The Ghost of Tom Joad") and seven previously unreleased originals ("Harry's Place," "Down in the Hole," "Heaven's Wall," "Frankie Fell in Love," "This Is Your Sword," "Hunter of Invisible Game," and "The Wall"). The songs were performed by the E Street Band (including Clarence Clemons and Danny Federici here and there), with Tom Morello featured on two-thirds of the tracks. A press release states that the songs were recorded in New Jersey, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Australia and New York City.

In the liner notes for the album, Springsteen discusses the eclectic grouping by stating, "This is music I always felt needed to be released." Regarding previously heard compositions "American Skin" and "The Wall," he notes, "I felt they were among the best of my writing and deserved a proper studio recording."

The title track, a new recording of a Tim Scott McConnell song that the E Street Band first cut in 1995, was positioned as the album's lead single. "High Hopes" was made available for streaming and download to coincide with the album announcement on November 25. A Thom Zimny-directed video accompanied the track's debut, utilizing footage from Australia 2013. Prior to that, a taste of the new album came in the studio version of "Dream Baby Dream," a new recording of the Suicide track that often closed Springsteen's 2005 shows. It first appeared in one of Zimny's numerous Wrecking Ball Tour retrospec-



tive videos that appeared online in the fall.

The third cover is The Saints' "Just Like Fire Would," which the E Street Band premiered live in 2013 in Brisbane (home to the Australian punk band). They recorded it shortly thereafter in Sydney with Morello.

In the liner notes for *High Hopes*, Bruce credits Morello as a catalyst for the new album: "Tom and his guitar became my muse, pushing the rest of this project to another level. Thanks for the inspiration Tom." He also notes that Morello (showing his super-fan colors) was the one who suggested reviving "High Hopes" earlier in 2013 and adding it to the live set in Australia. Morello, of course, also features on the new studio recordings of "American Skin" and "The Ghost of Tom Joad."

The other known entity on the record is "The Wall," debuted at the 2003 Doubletake Magazine benefit shows in Somerville, MA, and later performed twice on the tour for *Devils & Dust*. In the liner notes, Bruce clarifies and expands on remarks made while introducing the song pre-

viously, describing a visit with Patti Scialfa to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and recalling old friends lost to the war. Joe Grushecky is credited with the title and the idea.

Ron Aniello claims production credits again; Brendan O'Brien is credited with producing three tracks ("Harry's Place," "Down

in the Hole," and "Hunter of Invisible Game") and shares credits with Aniello on "Heaven's Wall." Given that "Harry's Place" is a known *Rising* outtake (Bruce having told Ted Koppel on *Nightline* that it was one of two songs recorded for *The Rising* that didn't make the record), it's likely that the other O'Brien-produced tracks originated in that time period as well.

On CD (with a limited bonus DVD available in some markets) and 2LP vinyl, *High Hopes* will be released just in time for the upcoming live dates in early 2014. In late January, Springsteen and E Street will travel to South Africa for the first time to perform three dates in Cape Town and one in Johannesburg. This is the band's first trip to South Africa and their only return to the continent since concerts in Zimbabwe and Abidjan during the 1988 Amnesty International Human Rights Now! tour. This outing will be followed by 13 shows in Australia and New Zealand. The promoter has confirmed that Tom Morello will be joining the band for the dates in Australasia. There are no announced U.S. or European dates as of press time. 🐘

GOIN' DOWN, DOWN

Returning to the Southern Hemisphere with *High Hopes*

1/26	Bellville Velodrome	Cape Town, SOUTH AFRICA
1/28	Bellville Velodrome	Cape Town, SOUTH AFRICA
1/29	Bellville Velodrome	Cape Town, SOUTH AFRICA
2/1	FNB Stadium	Johannesburg, SOUTH AFRICA
2/5	Perth Arena	Perth, AUSTRALIA
2/7	Perth Arena	Perth, AUSTRALIA
2/8	Perth Arena	Perth, AUSTRALIA
2/11	Entertainment Centre	Adelaide, AUSTRALIA
2/12	Entertainment Centre	Adelaide, AUSTRALIA
2/15	AAMI Park	Melbourne, AUSTRALIA
2/16	AAMI Park	Melbourne, AUSTRALIA
2/19	Allphones Arena	Sydney, AUSTRALIA
2/22	Hope Estate	Hunter Valley, AUSTRALIA
2/23	Hope Estate	Hunter Valley, AUSTRALIA
2/26	Entertainment Centre	Brisbane, AUSTRALIA
3/1	Mt. Smart Stadium	Auckland, NEW ZEALAND
3/2	Mt. Smart Stadium	Auckland, NEW ZEALAND

Q&A with biographer Peter Ames Carlin

Behind Bruce

By Brandon Shaw

Peter Ames Carlin's *Bruce*, a new biography of Bruce Springsteen published in hardcover in 2012 and this fall in softcover, is a fresh look at and an introspective view into arguably the most introspectively creative force of our time. Along with compelling new information regarding Bruce's formative years, the bio remains particularly notable for the artist's level of cooperation with the author. Springsteen not only sat for multiple interviews but also opened the door to grant Carlin access to family, friends, and colleagues. But the story is one Carlin wanted to tell regardless: "There was a kind of book that I was yearning to read that would be deeply involved in his music and also be able to tell a story about his life," he says, "one that would both humanize him and put into larger context the importance of his work." Also the author of *Paul McCartney: A Life and Catch a Wave: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson*, Carlin spoke with *Backstreets* about the work—the research, discussions, and text messages—behind *Bruce*.

Obviously there have been many Springsteen bios; what was your motivation to write another?

I wanted to talk and think seriously about what he represents as an artist, what he symbolizes in American culture, particularly as his image, his persona, has shifted and evolved over the years. People don't blink when you call him the rock 'n' roll laureate of the U.S., the poet laureate of the working class; you can see, when awful things happen and the nation needs to be brought together—after 9/11, after many major national disasters, after Hurricane Sandy—Bruce is the guy people turn to first, before all else. He has this kind of legitimacy that no other artist (except, arguably, Bono) has today. And

that's an incredibly powerful thing, a powerful force. As a writer, a singer, a musician, and certainly as a front man.

What surprised you most while doing your research?

The depth of feeling people had for him was certainly awe-inspiring—people he's worked with, his friends, his colleagues. The impact he's had on so many lives, and how seriously people take knowing and working with him. There have been a lot of people he's worked closely with for long stretches of time who have moved onto other circles, or have been shown the door by him. Sometimes it's inevitable—people have got to change, that type of stuff. But when people talk about no longer working with Bruce, people edge towards tears. He brings out this thing, he makes people... it's easy to get wrapped up in this amazing charisma he has, because he's so intently focused on the importance of what he's doing. He's fully conscious of the impact he can have, and he uses it very consciously and purposefully. Working with Bruce, it's very dif-

ficult not to feel like you're doing the most important work of your life, because goals and intently clear focus are what underlie the entire body of his work.

Did any of your pre-conceptions about Bruce change during the writing of the book? We're all fans... did anything he say or do shock or jar you in any way?

I went into it with a pretty intuitive sense that he's a complicated guy, that he was extremely intense and extremely complicated, and that in certain moments, he's a very electric, charismatic personality. When you're with him and he's focused, it's just the two of you, there's a lot of stuff happening. You feel the beam of his gaze and his focus, and so, it's really a sort of invigorating thing.

The one thing that I didn't see coming was a temper tantrum during soundcheck at the very first show in Atlanta on this [Wrecking Ball] tour. As far as "diva moments," it was reined in; it wasn't about an ego thing, it was about a technical issue. But this is someone who knows

what he wants something to sound like, and he obsesses over every aspect of it until it's done—exactly as he hears it in his head. He had a very strong idea about something, and it was impossible for it to happen, and he blew his top off. I knew that that [tendency] was there, but witnessing it firsthand was a little unsettling. Partly because I knew I was about to interview him, and I was like, "What's that gonna be like, he's now really pissed off!"

I anticipated that existed, but it's so far out of the usual narrative of what people say about Bruce that it was unsettling. It was unnerving for me, though it didn't change my sense of him.

The thing that disturbed me the most was when he was driving me somewhere in New Jersey, dark country road, rush hour time, there's cars on the road, he stops to make a left turn... he doesn't signal for his left turn. Usually if I'm in a car with somebody, I'll say, "Dude, signal!" But this was Bruce—I don't think I'm gonna do that right here and now. It just didn't seem like a good idea to be criticizing Bruce Springsteen.



CLARK GAYTON PHOTO

That was certainly a moment that I didn't see coming. Bruce Springsteen, of all American drivers, I thought... this guy should use his turn signal!

Did Bruce approve the manuscript? Did he see the book? What type of input did he have into this creative process, your writing process?

He read the manuscript; Bruce and Jon [Landau] both read the manuscript, just for accuracy's sake. When they came back with their thoughts, both were extremely clear that they had no expectation that I would do anything with their thoughts and critiques. Some things I just thought, "This is gonna stay." I know I've talked to enough people where I know what the truth is, even if I may add Bruce's perspective. He may have said "the date isn't right," or "from where I was sitting, this didn't happen." So I included his notes off of the manuscript in that regard. He was also willing to say, "I don't remember saying that, but that's definitely what the guy heard, so let it ride."

The other thing he said which I think is key... I talked to tons of people and absorbed tons of information, but when Bruce and I were having a conversation, he was responding to the manuscript, he was so thrilled by what other people had to say. He said, "Look, if there's anything you learned along the way that you didn't put in because it may make me uncomfortable, put it in. Don't hold back. I want this to be the full and entire truth."

I always felt like when bad things happened, things that seemed out of character, that I could establish it, illustrate it, and not linger over it too long—because it's obviously most interesting when you're looking at the digression from a pattern of behavior, but the problem is if you focus too much on the digression, then you lose the context of the pattern. I never felt like lingering over stuff just because it was gothic or fun. I'd say "What about this?" and he'd say "No, put it in!"

Do you think feelings of mortality spurred this? In other words: Clarence and Danny are gone, Terry Magovern is gone, his trainer is gone... is there a sense that there is a need for documentation for future generations that spurred Bruce's unusual-for-him tendency to open up, to provide all of this access?

Yes, absolutely. Well, I can't really identify that exactly; that's a question for Bruce. But my sense of it—this was stuff I heard from Jon or as the work was going on—was that Jon helped bring to the surface Bruce's instinct that this was the time to really get these stories down on paper.

What became particularly clear to me in his decision to open the door for his mom, to allow me into the family so widely, was that it was inspired to some degree by understanding that the generation before him—his mom and her sisters, in their late 80s and 90s—had only

so much time left on this world. Dora [Kirby], one of Adele's sisters, passed away months after speaking to me. These are amazing women with incredible stories that go back 75-plus years. Their insights and their experiences go back... these things were crucial. I think he thought it was crucial to capture them before they vanished. In me, he had someone with the interest and inquisitive nature of a journalist, but yes, there is a sense of documentarian that accompanies this as well.

I think, also, you think about legacy. You know the guy's going to go down in history, but exactly how will he be perceived by people in 100 years, 200 years? People will talk about him when they're talking about Steven Foster and Mark Twain and Steinbeck; he's right there, we've now got that on paper. He's the head of American folk voices, talking about the working man, the regular man's experience of life in this country through the ages. He'll be one of the main voices describing the mid-20th century through obviously the 21st and onwards, it seems. It was important to them that that doesn't get out of control, or move in a way that somehow doesn't reflect the truth. He writes in his music about quests for truth, and he wants his own narrative, his own legacy, to be left behind equally as truthfully. You've created this body of work over 50-plus years at this point; it's sort of like, people are going to be talking about this and analyzing this and judging it forever,

so while everyone's here and people can still tell stories—the people who lived them—this is one way to help put down a stone, to help create what the legacy will actually end up being. Or at least, it got to a point where they thought "This guy seems reasonably sane and he won't fuck it up too badly, maybe... maybe with a certain amount of care, even!"

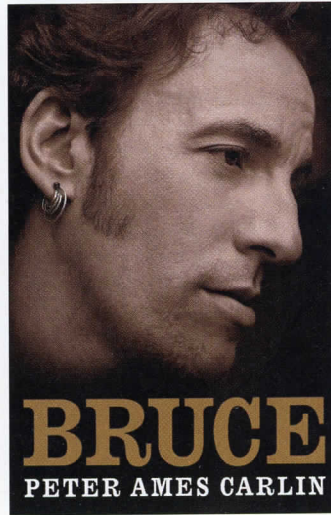
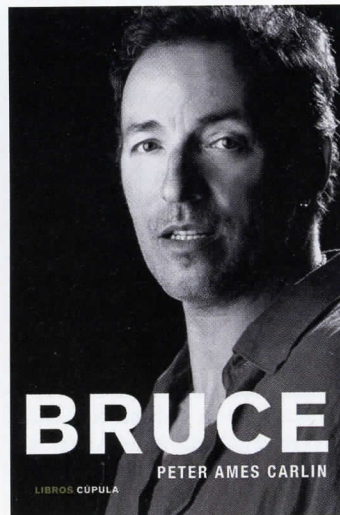
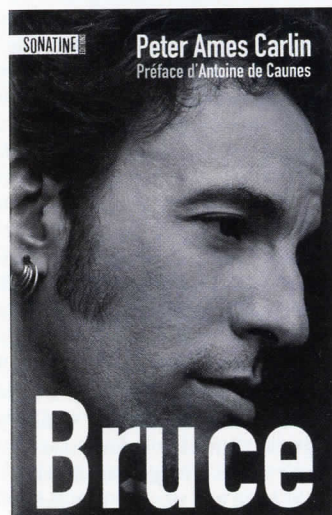
But let me be clear: throughout the entire process, Jon and Bruce were extremely clear every step of the way that I was independent, that they were giving me access to information, to take notes, gather as much information as I could, and tell it as I wanted.

Can you give me a sense of the timeline on this book? Did you have input throughout this most recent tour?

I finished it in April [2012], and I let him see a few parts early on. I was particularly concerned about the family stuff: I was writing about people who were explicitly not famous, so I had to have his approval. These [stories] were now on the record, so I didn't want to talk about someone with a tough life in a way that's going to put them out of context. Even the people who weren't, I just wanted to make sure that it seemed like I had told their stories accurately and represented them in an accurate way. It was important for me. Those were chapters I let Bruce look at really early. And also, there's a very close cousin who was there, a lot came from his part of the family, and Bruce's sister read it, and his mom too. The feedback from all of them was that they recognize the people in the story.

Tell me about your favorite part to hear, to learn, to research, to write. What are your favorite parts of the book, the most telling?

I guess the last two chapters of the book are the most significant—those are the ones that focus on where things are now. They're a little more first person, in a sense: those are largely moments I witnessed, very direct conversations I had, interviews I had. The next-to-last chapter is very Clarence-centric; I did a significantly long interview with Clarence in March of 2011, and he was very eager to talk.



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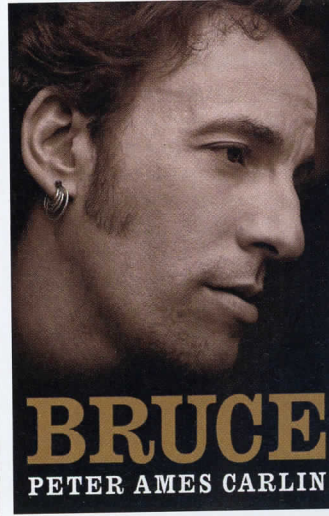
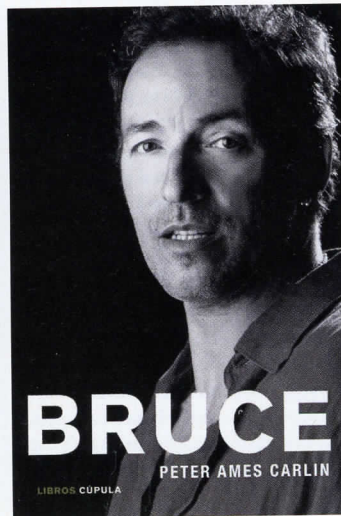
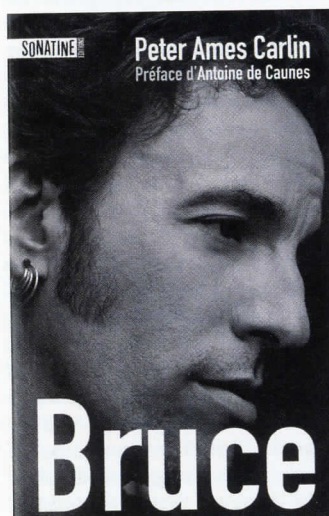
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"Who you see is the projection of him at his best. And when he steps out there, into the light, and people greet him with that kind of adoration... When people recognize him as the man he wants to be, how intoxicating would that be?"

And then the last chapter tells the story of the preparations for *Wrecking Ball* and the tour but also checks back in with Bruce's mom and aunts. A lot of what they say about his career is in the context of several generations of tough hardship for their families, economic and emotional. They're trying to consider some extraordinary tragedies over the years with the reconciliation with his incredible fortune, watching Bruce become who he is. There's a lot of real soul-searching that has come full circle. I found this quite moving, both in talking about Bruce but also the Springsteen-Zerilli clan.

In the book you discuss transformations: his nocturnal style spurring the rock-star life, how the attention he wanted at four is similar to the adoration he receives as a showman today. Can you speak to that more in depth?

He was living like that when he was four years old. This darkness stuff—here we get back to changed pre-conceptions—the childhood stuff, a lot of that was hugely surprising to me, the specifics of it, especially regarding the early years with his grandparents, their relationship with him, and how that distorted the whole Springsteen family. What I learned from his mom and sister

was that Bruce was such a golden child, he was truly worshiped around the house. The grandparents took him away from his parents, despite his mom in particular's unhappiness about that, and Bruce felt that they were his parents—his grandparents. When his mom insisted they move out of that house, it was hugely traumatic: he said he felt as though he'd been taken from his primary caregivers. So when we were talking about how the early years, as Bruce was describing how intense his grandparents' love for him must have been, it was like, "They must have loved you to pieces." And he would tell me, "to pieces would be correct."

The roots of worship... you begin to sense the life of a rock 'n' roll star, when he was four. After everyone went to sleep, he just wandered around the house and entertained himself until four in the morning.

How much of a difference do you see between the public and private Bruce Springsteen? Would you say the Bruce we see in broadcast interviews and in behind-the-scenes footage is the same we see on stage, or the same you saw in very private sessions during the course of your interviews?

Excellent question, because he's similar to a lot of us in this

way, particularly from an introspection perspective. The public Bruce is the Bruce he wants to be, that he aspires to be. He embodies that, and those values, a lot of the time. The private Bruce is the darker side, the part of him like in "One Step Up": "When I look at myself I don't see the man I wanted to be." There are moments when he fails himself, fails his ambitions. Join the club, man. He's not shy about that!

There are times in his career, this is private stuff, when you fuck up, you don't want to make a big public deal about it, especially if you don't end up in shackles somewhere. Everybody has weaknesses, he has his own, he has spent his life trying to deal with them, but that doesn't necessarily mean that's what he wants to advertise. It's a private struggle for people, including him.

Who you see is the projection of him at his best. And when he steps out there, into the light, and people greet him with that kind of adoration and that sense of moral purity in the room, and leadership, it's something that gives him an astonishing amount of energy and affirmation. When people recognize him as the man he wants be, how intoxicating would that be? He does a hell of a job being that guy.

Give me some Bruce lines you heard in private. I tend to convince myself I'm Bruce in awkward situations and need some new pithy lines to impress people with.

[Laughs] One thing I liked was when he used the phrase, "Don't drop your popcorn!" As in, "Don't get too excited yet!"

Another one is when he was describing Vini [Lopez] going to jail at one point, and someone asked, according to the story Bruce told me, "Where's Vini?" And he laughed that distinctive cackle and said, "He's in jail with a Texas regret!" I have used that line myself since. A Texas regret: now, that's a big, big regret, man!

Did you email Bruce? How did you follow up with him on certain things?

I actually texted him frequently—he's a big, big texter. He's always on his iPhone.

Is this an inappropriate time to ask for his cell phone number? I won't tell anyone. Also, I thought he hated cell phones—he used to talk frequently about how he abhorred them on the Reunion tour.

[Laughs] Well, times change and he adapts, just as the lyrics to his songs and his performance styles do. That's his nature. But he's very funny in texts, as he is in person. He's introspective, but not in the sense that he's stand-offish; he's certainly personable when he speaks, particularly about issues that are difficult to confront, like his past, his family, his history, you know?

During the writing of this book what also was funny was a memory I have. It was that show opener in Atlanta; Bruce came running around the stage as he often does during the solos and pointed and yelled, "Pete!" at me, just as I had been turning my back to the stage, to shield myself from the text message I was sending, desperately hoping he wouldn't notice me. I think he just saw me and was saying hi... but it's everyone's nightmare to be caught in the middle of a Bruce Springsteen performance, by Bruce himself, replying to emails or texting during a show.

You sure I can't get that cell phone number?

One day, man, one day. 🐼

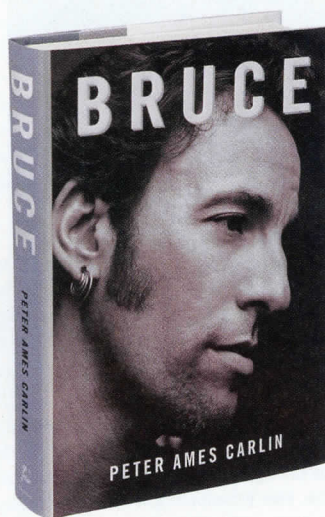
With a bevy of new Springsteen books...

Bruce leads the pack

By Charles R. Cross

For Bruce Springsteen fans the past year or so has brought a bounty of bookshelf offerings. There have been a half-dozen major books released—including a collection of interviews edited by this magazine's Christopher Phillips—with more to come. Add in countless inches of coverage of the 2012/2013 tour, and the press Springsteen did around the last album, and you have a banner stretch of commentary and biography that has not been matched since the heyday of the '80s. Eric Meola's gorgeous photo book *Streets of Fire* would have made this period a notable one by itself.

There's also Jeff Burger's *Springsteen on Springsteen*, a compilation of interviews and speeches, and Clinton Heylin's *E Street Shuffle: The Glory Days of Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band*. U.K.-based Heylin, a con-



BRUCE
By Peter Ames Carlin
512 pp., Touchstone

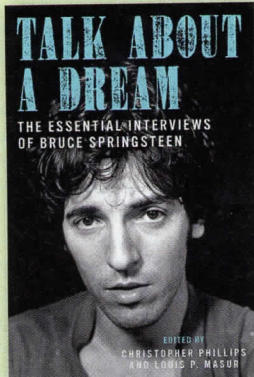
tributor to *Backstreets* in the '80s, focuses on Springsteen's first seven albums. His book includes one of the first detailed reports

on the legendary "Electric" *Nebraska* and—at least in the U.K. edition—goes into great detail regarding studio sessions.

When it comes to full-on biographies, there have been several. Marc Dolan's *Bruce Springsteen and the Promise of Rock 'n' Roll* was first out of the gate in the spring of 2012. Dolan, a professor who grew up in New Jersey, is largely successful in his attempt to flesh out the political and social context of Springsteen's songs. There is smart writing throughout, and insightful musical commentary, that somewhat makes up for the lack of original source material. On "Dancing in the Dark," Dolan notes, for example, "It's hard to say if it's really about anything, except the situation that Bruce found himself in during the winter of 1984: stuck." Dolan's book is a useful overview, with particular emphasis on the social milieu of growing up in New Jersey.

Other authors focused on more specific periods of Springsteen's life and work. Genealogist Craig Statham decided to look exclusively at Bruce's early years, and his *Springsteen, Saint in the City: 1949-1974* gives particular attention to Springsteen's bands pre-E Street. Erik Kirschbaum really zeroes in, telling the story behind the July 19, 1988 concert in East Berlin (with Jon Landau as an interview subject, filling in behind-the-scenes details) in *Bruce Springsteen, Rocking the Wall: The Berlin Concert That Changed the World*.

These won't be the last—and this writer may even one day tackle a second Bruce book (*Backstreets: Springsteen: The Man and His Music* came out in 1989). Springsteen's life is one so rich with classic rock archetypes that it will keep drawing writers (and book editors), as long as there are fans (and readers).



BOSS OF THE BOOKSHELF

Peter Ames Carlin's bio may be the marquee Bruce book of recent months, but it's also just one of a flurry of Bruce-related titles to hit shelves and e-readers of late. Jeff Vrabel offers a sampling.

TALK ABOUT A DREAM: THE ESSENTIAL INTERVIEWS OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN edited by Christopher Phillips and Louis P. Masur

And we're not just putting this at the top of the list because Phillips is the boss around these parts. Phillips and Masur have collected 30 crucial interviews spanning 40 years, administered by such luminaries as Robert Hilburn, Dave Marsh, Bob Costas and Elvis Costello. (And it includes Phillips' own *Backstreets* interviews with Springsteen from 2004 and 2007.)

SPRINGSTEEN: SAINT IN THE CITY: 1949-1974 by Craig Statham

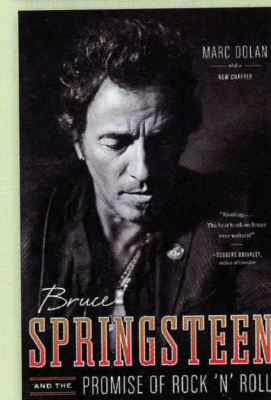
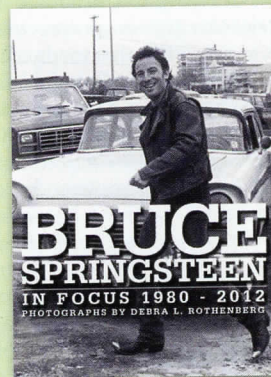
There's no shortage of books about Springsteen, but few of them stop at 1974. Statham's biography exclusively spotlights Bruce's early years, focusing on his childhood, pre-E Street bands, and signing with Columbia.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN IN FOCUS 1980-2012 by Debra Rothenberg

Photographer Rothenberg says for the first years of shooting Springsteen concerts she didn't know what a photo pass was. As such, this photo collection feels that much more like it comes from the fan's perspective.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE PROMISE OF ROCK 'N' ROLL by Marc Dolan

Dolan, a professor of English, American Studies and film, turns in a massive, meticulously researched and even-handed biography.



Bruce also suffers on the other end when Carlin does narrate, as many of his metaphors overreach. Bruce's relatives, for example, "moved through the world like a weather front." When Bruce ventures to Japan with Julianne, "It was all true love and lollipops in the land of the rising sun." Doug Springsteen "would already sense the venom creeping within himself." Bruce's long-dead father is one of the few relatives not directly sourced, and while he probably did feel venom, the line jars a reader into noticing the writer, as opposed to being absorbed into history unfolding on the page.

This is exacerbated by Carlin's footnotes, which appear at the bottom of the page rather than as endnotes. These are often cheeky, and they are the book's greatest barrier to the spell of reader imagination. Just eleven pages in, Carlin asks Bruce about the many frontier images in his early songs, and Bruce's response shows up in a footnote: "You've got my Rosebud," Bruce jokes, referencing the keystone in *Citizen Kane*. Bruce often makes these kinds of jokes onstage, or in articles, but this kind of footnote detracts from a sustained story arc in the text.

Speaking of Rosebud, Carlin hones in on Doug Springsteen as Bruce's true Rosebud, and I think he's overstated that importance. Consider, for example, the entire index listing for Doug in *Bruce*, and you see Carlin's angle: "Alleged abuse behavior of," "Bruce's music disdained by," "changed personality of,"

**The mystery of
Bruce Springsteen
— who he is, what
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unsolved.**

"dark moods of," "illness and death of," "low work ethic of," "move to California," and "smoking and drinking by." Douglas Springsteen was a tortured soul, but a biographer needs to explain to readers what shaped even the villains. Carlin also fails to quiz Bruce on how his depression or marriage woes were shaped by his father's shadow, which would have been key here in

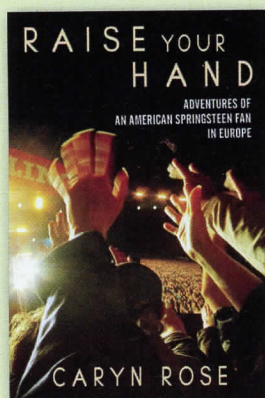
understanding the family legacy. Those are difficult questions to ask a famous rock star in his living room, but it is exactly why Bruce himself seems to control the narrative here, and not the writer. Carlin's most important relationship here is with his readers, and not his subject; that is a delicate line but one that marks Bruce's greatest failure.

Some of my criticism may admittedly be one author wanting to re-write a book he didn't write. Still, even to a fan who simply wants lots of details on music-making alone, *Bruce* has pacing flaws. The book is two-thirds over before *Born in the U.S.A.* is released, so the later career gets shortchanged, and there is a rushed and front-loaded feel. Carlin gives the Christic Institute shows—which, it could be argued, represent the debut of the current Bruce Springsteen, a man who talks about therapy onstage, who will rework an old song on piano, and can play without a band—just one paragraph. One of the most fatal flaws: Bruce's first wife gets less coverage than early girlfriend Lozito. Though Phillips talks on the record for the first time about Bruce, her one quote reads like something from a

Hollywood press release. She is most likely being polite, but her brief appearance has the contradictory effect of making us feel like we know even less about her. That's reflective of the larger book: access doesn't equal insight at every turn, and, in fact, may actually hinder it.

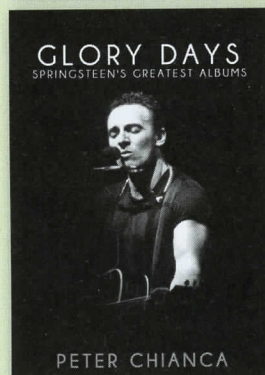
Yet for all that, Carlin's book has much to recommend, and it's not something any serious Springsteen fan would want to be without. There is only a small photo insert in *Bruce*, but the photos from the "Springsteen family archive" are worth the cover price alone.

One photograph of Bruce by Eric Meola, from their cross-country trip in 1977, suggests where this book might have gone, and why the mystery of Bruce Springsteen—who he is, what motivates him, what drives him—remains mostly unsolved. In the photograph, Bruce is leaning against his car, looking down the road towards the horizon. Like *Bruce*, the photograph draws us in, but it also leaves us wondering. Just what is he looking at? Just what does he see? Just what motivates this man in a desert to get onstage before thousands? Just what is that darkness on the horizon? 🐉



RAISE YOUR HAND: ADVENTURES OF AN AMERICAN SPRINGSTEEN FAN IN EUROPE by Caryn Rose

Also a *Backstreets* contributor, Rose hit seven concerts in five countries in 18 days, and chronicled her European vacation—sidewalk naps, front-row seats and all—for us less adventurous Stateside fans.



GLORY DAYS: SPRINGSTEEN'S GREATEST ALBUMS by Pete Chianca

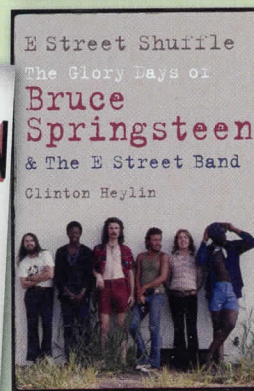
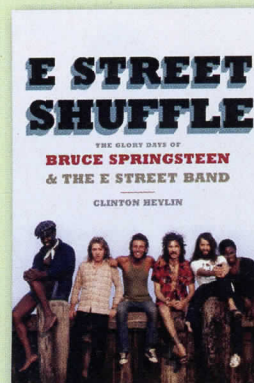
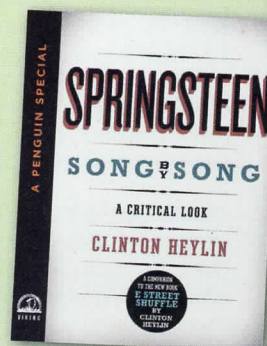
The editor of Blogness on the Edge of Town sets out to fuel some debate, inner and otherwise, pitting eight Springsteen albums against each other to determine the best.

E STREET SHUFFLE: THE GLORY DAYS OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE E STREET BAND (U.S. VERSION) by Clinton Heylin

Heylin's book focuses on Springsteen the songwriter in the First E Street Era, covering the creation (and editing and editing and editing) of everything up to *Tunnel of Love*. But it's unfortunately missing ...

E STREET SHUFFLE: THE GLORY DAYS OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE E STREET BAND (U.S. VERSION) by Clinton Heylin

...100 pages of crucial song-by-song data, left out of the U.S. version! The good news: They appear in this British edition, which is the one you should probably buy. Heylin had access to studio logs that give us session information far beyond what had been in the public record. (Plan B: The missing pages also appear in a Kindle-only release called *Springsteen Song by Song: A Critical Look.*) 🐉



Bring on your *Wrecking Ball* reviews

Step to the Line

By Bob Crane

Music critics here and abroad were conflicted, even more than usual, over *Wrecking Ball*. A *Backstreets* survey of 79 reviews—selected for diversity of opinion, format, and geography—found that while more than a third gave the album two thumbs up, a cadre of slash and burn reviewers hit Bruce Springsteen with some of the harshest commentaries of his career. Some of it is stunning.

Overall, the positives are many—Springsteen's 17th studio album "felt" generally very well received—and if any album's staying power is affected by reviews, *Wrecking Ball* has a long future. Hamish MacBain at *New Musical Express* (U.K.) called it "a triumph." *American Songwriter*'s Jim Beviglia said it "manages to fulfill, defy, and exceed expectations, all at once." "Springsteen's best album in thirty years," raved Joshua Hammond at *underthegunreview.net*. *Nebraska*'s twin, wrote Tape Mix blogger Joyce Millman.

New producer Ron Aniello? Tris McCall of *The Star-Ledger* said he "seems to get the Boss better than Brendan O'Brien ever did." Springsteen's thematic stance? He is "still fighting for what's right, true, and fair," said Jon Bream in the *Star Tribune*. The loops, the Lomax samples, the hip-hop, Irish jig, and that shotgun blast? "A tour de force," wrote John Soeder in *The Plain Dealer*.

Yet *Wrecking Ball*'s enormous creativity—or "experimenta-



tion," if you prefer—prevented a significant number of reviewers from loving it unconditionally. The problem, for them, is the profusion of elements: so many styles, musicians, influences, and emotions that something had to go wrong, somewhere, and eventually did. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, for instance, denied *Wrecking Ball* a perfect fourth star because of a "merely workmanlike middle section." *Mojo* (U.K.) also denied it a perfect rating, claiming that some songs "don't quite fit the big-theme fierceness." Many critics sniped at the gospel choir (" clichéd"), the production ("cluttered"), or the rap ("egads!"), but seldom all three.

On the darker fringe, a smaller contingent took up arms against a larger target: Bruce Springsteen himself, or more specifically, his songwriting. Their squawk might be dismissed as typical critic-rant except for the fact that many write for influential publications here and abroad.

The New York Times, *The Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*,

Denmark's *Ekstra Bladet*, *The Globe and Mail* in Toronto, and *The Observer* in London collectively landed the heaviest negative blows. Most aimed squarely at Springsteen the songwriter. "His days as an artist whose new work inspires young minds seems to be in the past," wrote Randall Roberts in the *Los Angeles Times*. Maybe, suggested Chris Richards of *The Washington Post*, "the songwriting train has left the station for good." *New York Times* critic Jon Caramanica used "nauseous" to describe his reaction to "Jack of All Trades." Added Pitchfork.com's Ryan Dombal, there's a sense that *Wrecking Ball*'s production techniques were used to cover "lackluster songwriting."

It's worth noting that some of these criticisms fall into patterns established in recent years. *The Washington Post*, for example, has trended negative since writer Liz Clarke accused Springsteen of "pimping" his music to the Super Bowl. Greg Kot of the *Chicago Tribune* famously sharpened his knives in 2005, claim-

ing that Springsteen is "better off" without the E Street Band. Furthermore, some of Springsteen's harshest critics today are relatively young; acting more like gunslingers than thoughtful analysts, they treated *Wrecking Ball* as proof that Springsteen is one step away from the next "Best Of" album.

Argue this all you want, but in the end, it was a Pulitzer Prize-winner who doesn't normally review music who nailed *Wrecking Ball* as well as anyone. "The new Bruce Springsteen album captures more raw emotional truth about the state of America than any politician ever could," wrote syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts. "It is Springsteen's triumph to honor anger and lamentation, but also to look beyond them. And to remind us that, though hard times come and hard times go, hope and defiance still abide and sustain."

Read on for a survey of worldwide critical opinion: the great, the good, and the *Wrecking Ball* squabble. ▶



THE GREAT...

"(A)n 11-song epic that finds Springsteen examining a society, its people, circumstances, and values (and yes, its sounds) with efficiency and eloquence. While the sound is modern, the topics really aren't: how people act in times of desperation, what binds and divides, and why—these aren't unfamiliar questions; Springsteen has asked them many times. But this time things feel different. The music sounds different, too. Springsteen was correct when he characterized the album as one of his more direct works. The songs hit the mark with ease."

—Jonathan Pont, *Backstreets.com* **Unrated**

"*Wrecking Ball* (is) both the best album of 2012 and Springsteen's best album in 30 years. If you don't spin this record, you simply have no place being a fan of music. If you do give it a listen and are not instantly inspired to change the world, you have no heart."

—Joshua Hammond, *Underthegunreview.net*
Rating: 10 / 10

"If the rumblings of this being dark put you off, they are mistaken. This is Bruce being real and being at the top of his game."

—Kenneth Oquist, *Artsandentertainmentplayground.com* **Rating: 5 / 5**

"(F)or an election year, *Wrecking Ball* is a boldly apolitical record. The basic premise is that the true business of politics—responsible governing, a commerce of shared rewards—is broken, with plenty of guilt to go around."

—David Fricke, *Rolling Stone* **Rating: 5 / 5**

"The few glimmers of light are occluded by curtains of bitter irony and weary acknowledgement of defeat. It's as if this most engagingly demagogic of American underclass standard-bearers is having to fight grimly to stave off the lure of nihilism."

—Andy Gill, *Uncut (U.K.)* **Rating: 9 / 10**

"In recent years, the Boss has been all over the place stylistically. His 17th album weaves those adventures into a tour de force, complete with hip-hop beats and gospel choirs."

—John Soeder, *The Plain Dealer* **Rating: A-**

"Springsteen brims with passion throughout, making *Wrecking Ball* a reverberating piece of work."

—Mario Tarradell, *The Dallas Morning News*
Rating: A-

"Even more than the lyrics, it's the knowing world-weariness behind them that makes the songs so haunting, and so uplifting when anger and desperation finally give way, however begrudgingly, to hope."

—Peter Chianca, *Wickedlocal.com* **Rating: A-**



"If there's a single moment that pointed the way to what would become the *Wrecking Ball* sound, it's 'How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?', an old Blind Alfred Reed standard to which Springsteen rewrote the lyrics as a response to the Hurricane Katrina tragedy."

—Steve Leftridge, *Popmatters.com*
Rating: 9 / 10

"Bruce Springsteen is often accused of lacking musical subtlety. This assertion now seems nearly as tin-eared as labelling him an unthinking flag-waver."

—Eric Volmers, *Calgary Herald (Canada)*
Rating: 4½ / 5

"One has to give credit to Springsteen for his will to unite poetry and politics, with lyrics placed in a musical landscape that is extraordinarily striking and rich on detail."

—Fredrik Wandrup, *Dagbladet (Norway)*
Unrated

"*Wrecking Ball* is that rare release that manages to fulfill, defy, and exceed expectations all at once. When your own personal wrecking ball comes crashing through, these songs will inspire you to stand tall, hold your head high, and send that infernal thing back from whence it came."

—Jim Beviglia, *American Songwriter*
Rating: 4½ / 5

"*Wrecking Ball* stands as Springsteen's best album release in almost thirty years. It's both wrenching and jubilant; looking back and looking forward; steeped in sorrow as well as celebratory and undaunted."

—Holly Cara Price, *Huffingtonpost.com*
Unrated

"*Wrecking Ball* is between great and very good among the totality of Springsteen's work, which is to say, it will likely be one of the best albums you hear all year."

—bhypes, *Spydersden.com* **Unrated**

"For its urgency, the breadth of the music performed admirably by the ad-hoc group of musicians, and how Mr. Springsteen is determined to inspire brotherhood with what he perceives as traditional American and Christian ideals, *Wrecking Ball* is a triumph."

— Jim Fusilli, *The Wall Street Journal* **Unrated**

"*Wrecking Ball*'s spiritual twin is *Nebraska*. Both records give voice to working people trying to remain honest and optimistic in hard times, to do the right thing, to find some reason to believe."

— Joyce Millman, *The Tape Mix*, joycemillman.wordpress.com **Unrated**

"'Wrecking Ball' (the song) will eventually stand next to 'Born to Run' as one of the defining songs of both Springsteen and his fans. *Wrecking Ball* (the album) will show that the 62-year-old Rock and Roll Hall of Famer still has some amazing surprises left in him."

— Glenn Gamboa, *Newsday* **Unrated**

"*Wrecking Ball* seeks to startle, inspire, incite and enlist. It will wake you up and it will knock you down. But if you listen to the sounds of America surging forward, it will also raise your spirits and give you the strength to battle on."

— Louis P. Masur, *Popmatters.com* **Unrated**

"What about the music? The folk music, the blues and the gospel are all there, and there is a reason for it. The idea is that the music should hold a historical context, and it should illustrate that this has happened before. And it continues to happen. Again, and again, and again."

— Unsigned, *Svenska Dagbladet* (Sweden) **Unrated**

"He's old enough to realise that losing your livelihood at 50 or 60 is a very different matter from losing it at 20 or 30, when hardship still possessed a certain gritty romanticism, and the future seemed more malleable."

— Andy Gill, *The Independent* (U.K.) **Unrated**

"The ideas on *Wrecking Ball* aren't all that new, but we need to give them a fresh hearing, because it is blind faith in progress that got us into this mess in the first place."

— Marc Dolan, *Salon.com* **Unrated**

"If ever America needed a fired-up Boss doing what he does best, it's in 2012. And boy oh boy, is Bruce Springsteen fired up... *Wrecking Ball* (is) a triumph."

— Hamish MacBain, *New Musical Express* (U.K.) **Unrated**

"He remains committed to raising the flag of the people who really matter to him, the millions of citizens who try to find a way for themselves in an ever more hostile world, the Americans who still believe in the greatness of their country."

— Óscar Bellot, *ABC.es* (Spain) **Unrated**

"From the start of his career, Springsteen has treated rock and roll like the folk music of modern times, the cultural heritage of his generation and of his social class... He takes us inside the whole musical story of the American people, from Sacred Harp to Woody Guthrie, from blues and gospel to immigrant folk songs."

— Sandro Portelli, *Il Manifesto* (Italy) **Unrated**

"If people are jarred by the disconnect of a millionaire singing about the struggles of hanging on to a minimum wage job, that tension is a tribute both to the art and the artist."

— Spencer Kornhaber, *The Atlantic* **Unrated**

"To heal the ravages from the financial crisis, Bruce deploys his talent of storytelling skills in songs set to evocative poetry often nourished by a string of Biblical metaphors and messianic citations."

— Eric Mandel, *Le Journal Du Dimanche* (France) **Unrated**

"It's easy to pigeonhole the record as being some kind of bold new step for Springsteen when in reality all of the themes and elements brought to the forefront on *Wrecking Ball* have been around for years, if not decades."

— Caryn Rose, *The Village Voice* **Unrated**

"*Wrecking Ball* is a one-man tea party, a protest record, and a declaration of principles."

— Arne Willander, *Die Welt* (Germany) **Unrated**

"The album is firmly on message throughout: Springsteen is making sure that no well-meaning aspirant to political office misinterprets his lyrics. If that robs his writing of some of its mystery, he's made up for it in confrontational muscle and compassion for his characters."

— Tris McCall, *The Star-Ledger* **Unrated**

"The whole work is infused by a rough spirit and a strong punk rock attitude, in a way similar to the one that characterized the last studio works of Joe Strummer, the late leader of The Clash, together with his Mescaleros."

— Luca Villa, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (Italy) **Unrated**

"... when married to *Magic* and *Working on a Dream*, Springsteen currently finds himself in a vein of form equally as rich as that mined in the period between 1975 and 1980, covering the classic albums *Born to Run*, *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *The River*."

— Ian Winwood, *BBC* (U.K.) **Unrated**

"Once again discord has returned to the land of the free. Where the previous album *Working on a Dream* lent expression to the intoxication of the hour, *Wrecking Ball* is the hangover that follows."

— Thomas Groß, *Die Zeit* (Germany) **Unrated**

THE GOOD...

"The language that *Wrecking Ball* speaks is a shadowy, potentially troublesome vernacular, one where the concepts of faith, patriotism, loyalty and honor are bandied about freely... Springsteen has taken back the true essence of these concepts."

— Jeff Miers, *The Buffalo News* **Rating: 3½ / 4**

"Springsteen's gift is that no matter how bleak his subject matter, he never comes across as a scold because he infuses his music with life and joy, big rock-and-roll choruses and bright instrumentation. There's always that glimmer of hope, that ray of sunshine."

— Howard Cohen, *The Miami Herald*

Rating: 3½ / 4

"He confronted similar subjects on *Nebraska* and *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, but *Wrecking Ball* is less darkly poetic, more emphatic and plain-spoken. Its populist anthems are unlikely to be misinterpreted and appropriated by Republican candidates."

— Edna Gundersen, *USA Today*

Rating: 3½ / 4

"*Wrecking Ball* is a punching fist of an album, loaded with trembling rage, but there are also spaces for reflection, a belief in solidarity as weapons and hope for the future. It's easy to get dazzled by his genuine rage, but behind it there is a heart beating with hope."

— Svein Andersen, *Aftenposten* (Norway)

Rating: 5 / 6

"On *Ball*'s best moments, Springsteen is fired up enough to borrow a socket wrench and knock out Lehman Brothers' teeth."

— Melissa Maerz, *Entertainment Weekly*

Rating: B

"Among the disc's more daring moves is its mildly experimental sound: with its samples, loops and sometimes filtered guitar work, it's hardly heartland rock by the numbers."

— Bernard Perusse, *The Gazette* (Canada)

Rating: 4 / 5

"There were many times we thought we were coming across the ghost of the great album of crisis which was *Darkness on the Edge of Town*. Springsteen didn't forget it, but he tries to look ahead and simply does his job. Half preacher, half boxer."

— François Gorin, *Telerama* (France)

Rating: 4 / 5

"He still bears the scars of a childhood overshadowed by his father Douglas's unemployment, and *Wrecking Ball* is strongly influenced by those experiences."

— Adrian Thrills, *The Daily Mail* (U.K.)

Rating: 4 / 5

"This album is a dramatic and considered personal statement; the E Street Band aren't involved, save the odd cameo. It is also, at times, wonderful, passionate music, a key factor that never eludes the canny entertainer in Springsteen."

— Joe Breen, *The Irish Times* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"Big as it is, *Wrecking Ball* still sounds haunting, weathered and ancient. It's an overwhelming, all-embracing statement on which a megastar sticks to his guns but this time uses 'em. It is truly a Springsteen album that stands tall with his very best work. And that's saying something."

— Alan Corr, *RTE (Ireland)* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"(F)or most—because there's a universality to this music—the best songs here raise a clenched fist in the face of indifferent, callous or impotent government, and corrupt, self-centred and expedient ideologies close to home. We've witnessed the wrecking ball too."

— Graham Reid, *The New Zealand Herald (New Zealand)* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"It has been over 10 years since he wrote music as inspiring... Additionally, my ears kneel down and praise the Lord for the fact that Springsteen has stopped working with producer Brendan O'Brien. The mixture of folk music, rock 'n' roll and gospel is excellently balanced."

— Anders Nunstedt, *Expressen (Sweden)* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"Uninhibited, *Wrecking Ball* misses a star here only because two love-among-the-economic-ruins songs, 'This Depression' and 'You've Got It,' don't quite fit the big-theme fierceness—deep feelings to draw together whoever may listen."

— Phil Sutcliffe, *Mojo (U.K.)* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"*Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *The River* tackled the same issues with narratives (and, indeed, music) more complex and poetically ambiguous than anything here."

— Neil McCormick, *The Telegraph (U.K.)* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"*Wrecking Ball* paints almost entirely in broad brushstrokes, but its bombast rarely seems hollow: it exists not merely to put bums on stadium seats, but in service of an anger that feels righteous, affecting and genuine. *Wrecking Ball* defies you not to be swept along with it."

— Alexis Petridis, *The Guardian (U.K.)* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"This is Springsteen's extravagant gift: finding the spark of uniqueness and worth in particular human lives and holding those lives up as a mirror for us to see the reflection of ourselves, of the time and place in which we live."

— Andy Whitman, *Christianity Today* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"The Boss continues to explore rock 'n' roll that sounds as good in a church as it does in a stadium. With its equal dose of powerful hooks and characters pushing through hard times, *Wrecking Ball* suggests that there might not even be a difference."

— Dan Caffrey, *ConsequenceofSound.net* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"The troubadour of America's collective dreams and sorrows is back ... with the introspective songwriting of *Nebraska*, the compelling and timely storying telling of *Born in the U.S.A.*, and the social uplifting spirit of *The Rising*."

— Celso Martins, *Atual Expresso (Portugal)* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"The sprawling street poetry of his early work feels dead and buried, but *Wrecking Ball* makes up for it with its bold, Occupy-friendly protest lyrics and boisterously uplifting sound."

— Brett Warner, *Ology.com* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"Not every experiment works and the title track seems out of place. But what makes this album resonate has more to do with heart and spirit than whether or not that guest rap was the best idea ever."

— Ed Masley, *The Arizona Republic* **Rating: 4 / 5**

"*Wrecking Ball* is solidly built, with not a bad song in the bunch. It's short on great ones, however, and as such is a mild disappointment, especially since its subject matter, about struggle, strife, and stubborn faith, in an election year yet, is so perfectly in his wheelhouse."

— Dan DeLuca, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* **Rating: 3 / 4**

"This collection makes more sense than 2009's utterly forgettable *Working on a Dream* because here the millionaire but blue-collar Boss is still fighting for what's right, true and fair."

— Jon Bream, *Star Tribune* **Rating: 3 / 4**

"There's nothing in the delivery here that matches the anguish and intensity on a lot of the *Darkness* songs when the Boss was howling mad."

— Scott Mervis, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* **Rating: 3 / 4**

"*Wrecking Ball* is a mix of the very good and the not quite there. There are once again quite a few songs that will outlast him but not all good intentions succeed, not everything is saved by the familiar cavalry."

— Bernard Zuel, *The Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)* **Unrated**

"The range of the songs, from sorrow to anger to determination to hope, offer an emotional map for our time and our fight for something better. It's not a perfect map or a

perfect album, but it's an important task and a good listen."

— Laura Clawson, *Dailykos.com* **Unrated**

"*Wrecking Ball* is a culmination of the Viagra-era Springsteen. He has stolen bits and pieces from every album he has released since *The Rising* and crammed it all into one... For the most part it works."

— Matt Kiebus, *Deathandtaxesmag.com* **Unrated**

"*Wrecking Ball* is effectively a concept album that moves from despair to redemption, but it's too schematic and at times too musically overblown to stir the blood instinctively."

— Alan Morrison, *The Herald (Scotland)* **Unrated**

"One odd thing Springsteen does on this album is to all but set aside one of his major skills: storytelling through a single character or two. Giants Stadium and the guy in 'You've Got It' end up being the album's most three-dimensional characters."

— Jon Pareles, *The New York Times* **Unrated**

"Vague sloganeering doesn't suit him. He's more complex than that, or he used to be. Let's hope next time the lyrics match the captivating choruses and catchy chord progressions."

— Jeb Gottlieb, *Boston Herald* **Unrated**

"Despite a handful of missteps—the clichéd gospel choir, dated looping effects and a misguided rap—the songs are expertly crafted and their energy reflects Springsteen's palpable anger. But they aren't inspired and don't transcend, which is what we've rightly come to expect."

— Jeffrey Lee Puckett, *The Courier-Journal* **Unrated**

"The opening songs are effective and have a formidable impact... In the second half, the songs were not permitted to be in their stripped state as they would have been with a producer with a lighter hand. This could have yielded one of the best albums. What a shame."

— Olivier Nuc, *Le Figaro (France)* **Unrated**

& THE WRECKING BALL SQUABBLE

"*Ball* sounds bloated and immobile. The production has a foggy density; the arrangements a girth that borders on the obese. And something very strange has been done to the backup singers. They sound cartoonishly high, like gospel chipmunks."

— Jim Farber, *New York Daily News* **Rating: 2 / 5**

"DO WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN?"

Bruce Springsteen on the genesis, creation, and themes of *Wrecking Ball*

The guy who produced this record is a fellow named Ron Aniello. I assisted him, and Jon [Landau] executive produced. Ron had worked on a few of Patti [Scafia]’s records previously, and I was actually working on another record before this record. I spent on-and-off about a year on that one before I threw it out, which is something I do every once in a while. He came in to help me finish that one, and as we went along, a few of the songs started to come up for this record; he had a lot of fresh ideas about the way the music could sound, and he had a large library of sounds—alternative and hip-hop elements—and we used quite a bit of different looping techniques. It was just a very different experience, really, with the two of us in the studio when we started out.... we were in our own studio, and each one of the songs started off as kind of a folk song, with just me and the acoustic guitar. And then everything else got slipped on. Tommy Morello from Rage Against the Machine, he came in and played the guitar on “This Depression” and on “Jack of all Trades.” Patti and Soozie sang; Max plays on a cut; Clarence is on “Land of Hope and Dreams.”...

The first half of it, particularly, is very angry. The genesis of the record was after 2008, when we had the huge financial crisis in the States, and there was really no accountability for years and years. People lost their homes, and I had friends who were losing their homes, and nobody went to jail. Nobody was responsible. People lost enormous amounts

of their net worth. Previous to Occupy Wall Street, there was no pushback: there was no movement, there was no voice that was saying just how outrageous—that a basic theft had occurred that struck at the heart of what the entire American idea was about. It was a complete disregard of history, of context, of community; it was all about “what can I get today.” It was just an enormous fault line that cracked the American system wide open. And I think its repercussions are just beginning to really, really be felt.

So I think I wrote “We Take Care of Our Own” somewhere around 2009 or 2010, and I put it away in my book. And the idea behind that song was that’s what’s supposed to happen, but was not happening.... “We Take Care of Our Own,” “Shackled and Drawn,” and “Rocky Ground” came along for almost a gospel album package I was thinking about. And then the other things came very quickly, one after another, as soon as I found the voice that I was going to use. “Easy Money,” and then the rest of the songs came pretty quickly, one day at a time....

Most of the record was made [by the time Clarence died]; 95 percent of it was made, and it wasn’t an E Street Band record. It was basically a solo project. So [his death] didn’t immediately impact the record. This record took quite a different musical tilt. We were lucky to get him on “Land of Hope & Dreams,” which was essential—really essential. When he comes up, it’s just a lovely moment for me....

“We Take Care of Our Own,” it asks the question that the rest of the record tries to answer. Which is, of course: Do we? Do we take care of our own? And we often don’t. We don’t provide an equal playing field for all our citizens. And at the same time, [the song] doesn’t cede what would be patriotism or images like the flag to just the right. I claim those, as I’ve done in a lot of my work throughout the years. The rest of the record tries to answer the questions that come up in the last verse of that song: Where are the merciful hearts? Where is the work that I need? Where is the spirit

that reigns over me? Where are the eyes that see? Those are the questions the rest of the record tries to answer and that are embedded in the question that the title of that song is, “We Take Care of Our Own.”...

“Wrecking Ball” seemed like a metaphor for what had occurred—it’s an image where something is destroyed to build something new, and it was also an image [suggesting] just the flat destruction of some fundamental American values and ideas that occurred over the past 30 years. It was a 30-year process of deregulation and different things that added up to the inequality that we’re experiencing in the States right now. So, it seemed like a good metaphor....

The trouble with a record, if you write a really big song at the beginning, the record demands to gain size as it goes along—or else you blew

your wad at the top, my friend [laughs]. That’s why, how many records do you put on where it’s like, hey, that first song!... That second song’s good... [snores]. You’re out by number seven or eight.

But on our records, I try to build them so there’s a question asked, and there are scenarios where those questions are played out. If you look at this record, there’s a question asked: *Do we take care of our own?* I don’t think so, a lot of times. So then there are scenarios where you meet the characters who have been impacted by the failure of those ideas and values. You get to the guy on “Easy Money,” he’s going out for a robbing spree—which is really just what’s occurred at

the top of the pyramid. He’s imitating your guys on Wall Street the only way he knows how: I’m going out tonight for easy money.

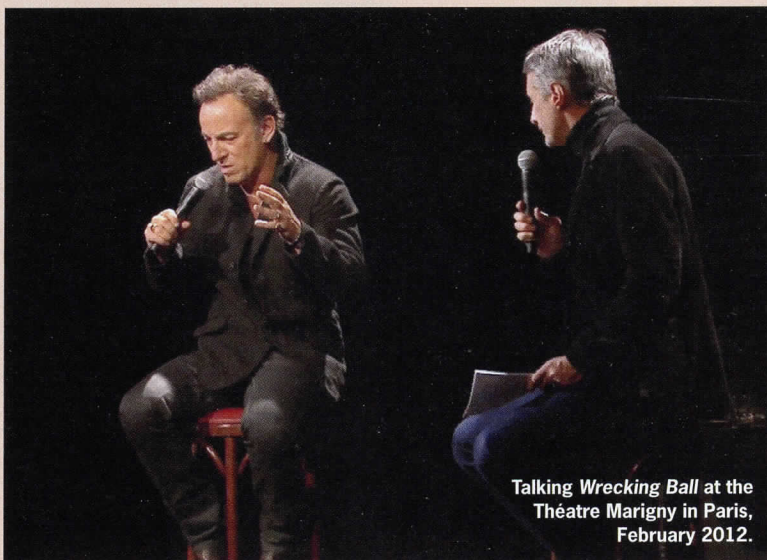
If you trace it along, every song introduces you to a slightly different character. Then at the end, I’ve got to find some way to mend their stories together so it all makes sense to you. I’ve got to try to find some way not necessarily to answer the question that I asked, but to move the question forward, to move the ideas forward, to move forward in the search for a new day. “A new day” comes up a lot in the record, which is really just, okay, how do you move forward? I’m interested in that.

So the record has to build, and it has to expand emotionally and spiritually, and it’s also supposed to be throwing you a good time in the mix. You know, it’s got to sound good and play great. That’s always a challenge, but “Land of Hope and Dreams” was a song of such size and spiritual dimension that by the time the end of the record came around, it fit really well.

With “Land of Hope and Dreams,” I needed a song that was very spiritual, because the record moves from guys who are really very angry to guys who are angry but constructive. To me there’s always a spiritual element in that, and a religious element to some degree. Maybe that’s just my Catholic upbringing, but that’s how I write about it. So that song was big enough.

Also, those are voices from history and other sides of the grave. If you listen to the record, I use a lot of folk music. There’s some Civil War music. There’s gospel music. There are ’30s horns in “Jack of All Trades.” That’s the way I used the music—the idea was that the music was going to contextualize historically that this has happened before: it happened in the 1970s, it happened in the ’30s, it happened in the 1800s... it’s cyclical. Over, and over, and over, and over again. So I try to pick up some of the continuity and the historical resonance through the music. 🐉

—from an International Press Conference for *Wrecking Ball* in Paris, France, February 2012.



Talking *Wrecking Ball* at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris, February 2012.

"Wrecking Ball is so serious in its mission to document the current crisis that it'll likely sink faster than the Republican nominee once the economy recovers and the crisis passes."

— Stephen M. Deusner, *Paste* **Rating: 7 / 10**

"The main problem stems from what appears to be a conscious decision on his part to change his songwriting approach... (leaving) us without the detailed, compelling characters with whom we can empathize that we've come to expect."

— Dave Lifton, *Ultimate Classic Rock*
Rating: 3½ / 5

"Bruce Springsteen is a great songwriter who has lost the ability to write great songs. Since *Tunnel of Love*, he has failed to deliver anything top class and *Wrecking Ball* is yet another album ruled by mediocrity."

— Thomas Treo, *Ekstra Bladet* (Denmark)
Rating: 3 / 5

"Pathos is really only alive when there is musical vision. Bruce Springsteen used to be endowed by that vision—that words and music would push the same buttons ... Although *Wrecking Ball* is full of good ambition, the punch in the face is overly gentle."

— Håkan Steen, *Aftonbladet* (Sweden)
Rating: 3 / 5

"Even as you understand *Wrecking Ball*'s aims, the album's calculations are a little too plain to see: its desire to rally too naked, its tropes too worn, its bluntness too blunt... You want this record to sell by the barrow-load, but you might not actually want to play it that often."

— Kitty Empire, *The Observer* (U.K.)
Rating: 3 / 5

"Springsteen, a proponent of the dense Wall of Sound production method, delivers his new, folkier sound in a paradoxically blown-up production. If anything, the production on this album is more like a larger, now-crumbling wall of sound."

— Benjamin Naddaff-Hafrey, *The Harvard Crimson* **Rating: 3 / 5**

"His days as an artist whose new work inspires young minds seem to be in the past. While you're likely to find youth citing *Darkness on the Edge of Town* or *Nebraska* as touchstones, it's far less likely that in two decades they'll be discussing *Wrecking Ball* that way."

— Randall Roberts, *Los Angeles Times*
Rating: 2½ / 4

"This is the kind of album that demanded to be heard in raw, unpolished form, so it's an absolute shame Springsteen chose to apply a healthy dose of studio gloss throughout, piling on sweeping string sections, gospel choirs and cheesy synthesizer flourishes."

— Andy Downing, *Wisconsin State Journal*
Rating: 2½ / 4



"The production isn't a disaster, but... there's the tugging sense that Springsteen and Aniello are trying to cover up some of the album's lackluster songwriting."

— Ryan Dombal, *Pitchfork.com*
Rating: 5.9 / 10.0

"He's written some resonant songs. But he lost his nerve as a coproducer, going for stadium bombast instead of the unadorned grit these stories of hard times demand."

— Greg Kot, *Chicago Tribune* **Rating: 2 / 4**

"One could give Bruce Springsteen a pass and argue that all rock stars are hypocritical. But one could not give Springsteen a pass for betraying his audience with his music, which has gone from thoughtful and groundbreaking to thoughtless and cliché."

— Edward Daily, *Examiner.com* **Rating: D-**

"*Wrecking Ball* is a conflicted creation. In the end, Springsteen merely falls to his knees and calls on 'a shepherd' to come sort it all out."

— Thomas Conner, *Chicago Sun-Times*
Unrated

"I still believe in what Springsteen stands for. What I've lost faith in is his music ... Springsteen's sound has bulked up embarrassingly ... *Wrecking Ball* is overstuffed, with sawing violins, braying brass and earnestly harmonizing gospel choirs crammed into every available cranny."

— J.D. Considine, *The Globe and Mail* (Canada)
Unrated

"He's losing definition in his voice, but in ways that are less interesting than Bob Dylan, Neil Young or Tom Waits. He's picking obvi-

ous targets, painting them with wide brushes, then taking cannon shots that can't miss."

— Jon Caramanica, *The New York Times*
Unrated

"It's been a decade since Springsteen last conjured heavy, truth-telling magic in the studio with *The Rising*. Since then, too many of his songs have felt as if they were written more out of obligation than urgency. *Wrecking Ball* might make you wonder if the songwriting train has left the station for good."

— Chris Richards, *The Washington Post*
Unrated

SONG BY SONG

WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN

"The emphatic album opener takes the measure of an America that has reneged on what Springsteen views, in a favorite formulation, as its 'promise' to look after all its citizens."

— Dan DeLuca, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Mr. Springsteen declares that Americans have been failed by their institutions, but the song isn't an antigovernment screed. Rather, it is apathy that he opposes."

— Jim Fusilli, *The Wall Street Journal*

"In my imagination he was watching that Republican debate when someone in the audience cheered the idea of letting the uninsured die, and his sense of duty kicked in; he thought he should write a song that insists compassion is patriotic."

— Jon Pareles, *The New York Times*

"(T)his is Bruce at his most Bono. The man whose lyrics for *Born in the U.S.A.* were so widely misinterpreted should realise that this class-conscious rallying cry for patriotic solidarity won't sound the same to ears beyond U.S. borders."

— Alan Morrison, *The Herald* (Scotland)

"...first seemed stirring, (but) sounds, with repeated listens, like a car commercial."

— Jim Farber, *New York Daily News*

EASY MONEY

"The hopeful bluster of the hustler echoes the paroled convict on Tom Joad's 'Straight Time' or the fated wannabe gangsters from 'Atlantic City.'"

— Allen St. John, *Forbes*

"The wordless 'na-na' harmonies make it sound like a fun-loving romp instead of a reckoning."

— Greg Kot, *Chicago Tribune*

"...deals with the corrosive trickle-down effect of toxic greed: if they can get away with it, reasons the benighted protagonist preparing for petty crime, why should I follow the rules?"

— Andy Gill, *Uncut* (U.K.)

"...shows potential but the track is wrapped in so much plastic that it feels like being in one of the Scottish tourist pubs in the middle of Copenhagen."

— Thomas Treo, *Ekstra Bladet* (Denmark)

"This is an admirable attempt at modernized Depression-era folk protest music, but between the lazy lyricism and the cluttered production, the song comes across as forced."

— Benjamin Naddaff-Hafrey, *The Harvard Crimson*

"...comes with a storyline that recalls 'Atlantic City' and strings borrowed from 'Into the Fire'—it's a ready-made, and a tempting one to write off."

— Jonathan Pont, *Backstreets.com*

SHACKLED AND DRAWN

"...could have easily been a solo outing reminiscent of Woody Guthrie (and it still would have been great), but is elevated to barn burning elation thanks to a powerhouse backing choir, Charlie Giordano's undulating accordion, and street preaching samples."

— Dan Caffrey, *ConsequenceofSound.net*

"(O)ne of the album's best songs. The narrator is assertive and direct. 'Let a man work—is that so wrong?' he righteously yells."

— Marc Dolan, *Salon.com*

"...shaves off some of the rollicking public bar spirit of his *Live in Dublin* album and has a powerful imperative of folk sentiment."

— Graham Reid, *The New Zealand Herald* (New Zealand)

"...a butt-kicker... a working-class man's howl of righteous fury."

— Jeff Miers, *The Buffalo News*

"When The Boss sings 'freedom is a dirty shirt,' his lyrics come across as cheap Woody Guthrie slogans."

— Jeb Gottlieb, *Boston Herald*

JACK OF ALL TRADES

"Stunning."

— Jim Beviglia, *American Songwriter*

"(The) most gripping new song on *Wrecking Ball*... Springsteen plays a guy from the new permalance working class, skilled and drifting, with no benefits, security or, by the end, patience."

— David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*

"...is supposed to reflect one man's will to survive, but the protagonist doesn't breathe. He just recites platitudes."

— Jeffrey Lee Puckett, *The Courier-Journal*

"...verges on self-parody."

— Jon Pareles, *The New York Times*

"When Springsteen intones, 'I'll mow your lawn, clean the leaves out your drain', the sodden workingman empathy literally made me nauseous."

— Jon Caramanica, *The New York Times*

DEATH TO MY HOMETOWN

"(A) raucous Pogues-like Celtic stomp... The Boss lashes out at the new 'robber barons' who did their damage without rifles or cannonballs. Woody Guthrie did warn us a long time ago 'that some people rob you with a fountain pen.'"

— Scott Mervis, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"...is a highly enjoyable exercise in Flogging Molly-style Celtic punk (the Boss even puts on a not-too-shabby Irish accent)."

— Tris McCall, *The Star-Ledger*

"...poignant, a twilight tableau of an old ghost town ravaged by an invisible war, put on without an army, without cannons."

— Eric Mandel, *Le Journal Du Dimanche* (France)

"It takes Wall Street henchmen to task, and you can square dance to it."

— Dan DeLuca, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"The song is vague enough that anything could be killing his hometown—greedy bankers, anti-union advocates, biker gangs, aliens. That shotgun blast conveys the incredibly high stakes more effectively than any of Springsteen's lyrics."

— Stephen M. Deusner, *Paste*

THIS DEPRESSION

"...maybe the darkest and most impressive song of the album. The drums drum like bells of doom while Springsteen confesses his hopelessness."

— Svein Andersen, *Aftenposten* (Norway)

"A meditation on mentality, not economics."

— Thomas Conner, *Chicago Sun-Times*

"Ballad with synth and heavy-handed drums that remind a little bit of Bruce during his *Human Touch* / *Lucky Town* period. The best thing is the melancholic lyrics."

— Anders Nunstedt, *Expressen* (Sweden)

"There's an underlying acknowledgement that these slings and arrows of outrageous fortune are that much more wounding for those in their fifties and sixties than they were thirty years earlier, when the pros-

HECK OF A JOB, BRUCIE

On the release of "We Take Care of Our Own"

The ultra-anthem "We Take Care of Our Own" marches in with one of Springsteen's most martial rhythms—a kickdrum on every downbeat—since "Badlands." And you better believe it has some of the same "trouble in the heartland" concerns, too. But then there's that chorus: rousing, uplifting, and positioning "We Take Care of Our Own" to not only be Springsteen's most misinterpreted song since "Born in the U.S.A.," but misinterpreted in precisely the same way. With its imagery of flying flags, it's practically begging for it.

And there are takers. The *L.A. Times*' Randall Roberts describes the song as "an affirmation of national glory," with a chorus that reveals the song to be "about the country and hardship, but also about community and pride." The *Atlantic Wire* cheerily reports, "it's really, really good. This is to be expected, because it's Springsteen, and also because the song involves flags, loyalty oaths, and going through life with a heart-as-big-as-all-outdoors."

Of course, perhaps even more than with "Born in the U.S.A.," even half-listening to the verses brings the awareness that the chorus is not as rah-rah as it sounds. This is a song of searching, and not finding—searching for mercy, for love, for work, for spirit, for the American promise, and, recalling "Long Walk Home" from 2007's *Magic*, for "the map that leads me home." The few concrete nouns point to the Hurricane Katrina tragedy as Bruce's prime example to put the chorus in perspective, "from the shotgun shack to the Superdome." Following the line "There ain't no help, the cavalry stayed home," the "We take care of our own" chorus can be heard as cuttingly ironic: we don't.

In the *New York Daily News*, under a headline calling the song "a tale of American self-reliance," Jim Farber writes: "The interesting part is, you could view its title line in one of two ways. When Bruce sings, with steady determination, 'Wherever this flag is flown/we take care of our own,' it could read as either a sober reminder to those in power of what we owe each other. Or it could be seen as a simple statement of fact—an assertion of self-reliance, a key quality of the national character."

I'd argue that there are more than two ways to view the title. Aside from an ironic interpretation, it can also be heard as an accusation: we don't take care of everyone in this country; we take care of our own. With a subdivided America

suffering from paralyzing partisanship as well as racism, homophobia, xenophobia... who exactly constitutes "our own" has become a far narrower subset than everyone who lives under that flying flag. As Bruce sang in "American Land," "The hands that built the country we're all trying to keep down." In that sense the phrase "we take care of our own" suggests bailed-out banks giving management bonuses, the wealthy giving tax breaks to the wealthy, "Marriage Protection," and a Federal Emergency Management Agency that shockingly appeared to view an American city as "other" in its response to Katrina.

Which leads to a darker connotation of "We take care of our own," a phrase often invoked by groups wanting to keep outsiders out, to justify violent, illegal, or immoral acts. Chew on this, from a 2009 article in *The Nation* called

"Katrina's Hidden Race War," about a white "militia" shooting at least 11 African-American men "in the days after the storm, when the city fractured along

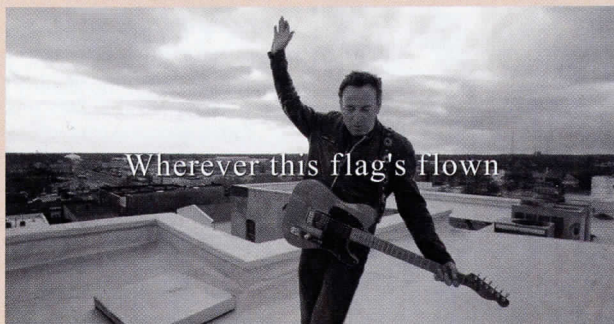
racial fault lines as its government collapsed":

Surrounded by a crowd of sunburned white Algiers Point locals at a barbecue held not long after the hurricane, [militia member Wayne Janak] smiles and tells the camera, "It was great! It was like pheasant season in South Dakota. If it moved, you shot it." A native of Chicago, Janak also boasts of becoming a true Southerner, saying, "I am no longer a Yankee. I earned my wings." A white woman standing next to him adds, "He understands the N-word now." In this neighborhood, she continues, "we take care of our own."

From Chicago to New Orleans, that's trouble in the heartland.

As with "Born in the U.S.A.," it's Springsteen's powerful employment of ambiguity that allows this song to mean all these things at once: it's an anthemic call for compassion, and a scathing look at how we've fallen short; it's despairing yet inspiring; it damns while it praises. A song "about community and pride?" Hard to see that from where I stand. Maybe about the search for community and pride. But however you hear the chorus, it's clear that "We Take Care of Our Own" is another entry in Springsteen's documentation of the miles marked between the American promise and the American reality. ➔

—Christopher Phillips, January 19, 2012



pect of failure could be burnished with a Bukowskian lustre of romantic tribulation."

—Andy Gill, *Uncut* (U.K.)

"... is not depressing at all, but addresses needing a human touch to get through the hard times."

—Kenneth E. Oquist, *Artsandentertainmentplayground.com*

"*The Rising* measured the cost of 9/11, and *Magic* explored American disillusionment. But neither sounded as bleak as this—'never this down,' as the character confesses... The only fix comes from connecting with the heart of another person, and that desperate plea echoes to the point where you wonder whether Springsteen is writing the Great American Eulogy."

—Jonathan Pont, *Backstreets.com*

WRECKING BALL

"On its face, (it) appears to be a lighthearted lark... It turns out to be the album's best example of the sort of blood-stirring and defiantly hopeful songs that Springsteen has long been expert at."

—Dan DeLuca, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"The song says we can take it on the chin. It's about resilience, and singing them to hell."

—Kelly-Jane Cotter, *Asbury Park Press*

"...classic Springsteen via Woody Guthrie... The man who doesn't feel at least a quick glimmer of recognition in Bruce's gaze is probably lying. He's really good at this stuff."

—Tjames Madison, *Soundspike.com*

"Springsteen uses the demolition of Giants Stadium in New Jersey as a metaphor to emphasise the value of place, solidarity, spirit and memory, defiantly challenging the powerful to 'bring on their wrecking ball.' It's vintage Springsteen, referencing the past to help frame the present."

—Joe Breen, *The Irish Times*

"...a roar of defiance."

—Adrian Thrills, *The Daily Mail* (U.K.)

"That Springsteen crafted an album around 'Wrecking Ball,' debuted on tour in 2009, is remarkable; that he didn't rewrite it for the sake of relevance (save for when he sang it in Philadelphia, where 'cheesesteaks grow as big as airplanes' and 'Dr. J. played the game') even more so. But he didn't have to. Springsteen has written with dual purposes in mind for a long time."

—Jonathan Pont, *Backstreets.com*

YOU'VE GOT IT

"The lyrical angle sounds strikingly similar to Def Leppard's '80s hard-rock anthem 'Armageddon It.'"

—Randall Roberts, *Los Angeles Times*



"... completely and utterly misses the mark."

— Matt Kiebus, *Deathandtaxesmag.com*

"...comes closest to what Bruce used to sound like in its melody and Bruce's vocal delivery, and not just because it sounds an awful lot like 'All or Nothin' at All' from *Human Touch*."

— Steve Leftridge, *Popmatters.com*

"...[sounds] like it wandered in off a Bob Seger album."

— Peter Chianca, *Wickedlocal.com*

"Springsteen's ballads have always been made of archetypes like rivers and fast cars. But he's rarely written anything as excruciatingly vague as 'You've Got It,' which plays like Twenty Questions clues."

— Melissa Maerz, *Entertainment Weekly*

ROCKY GROUND

"...frankly amazing, completely off the charts every which way to Sunday... It's huge, it's massive and gorgeous, and will no doubt bring the house down when performed live."

— Holly Cara Price, *Huffingtonpost.com*

"Gorgeous, uncharacterizable (gospel-electronica? Folk-rap?)."

— Joyce Millman, *The Tape Mix*

"A beautiful piece of music with the gravity and reverence of a psalm."

— Kelly-Jane Cotter, *Asbury Park Press*

"Unprecedented and beautiful, 'Rocky Ground' develops through the call-and-response singing of Springsteen and Michelle Moore."

— Phil Sutcliffe, *Mojo* (U.K.)

"...as resolute as anything Springsteen has delivered. In it we hear the distant echoes of forbears, whether from the Rattlesnake Speedway or the neighborhood where Lena gets her son Charles ready for school."

— Jonathan Pont, *Backstreets.com*

"...may be the worst thing he's done since '57 Channels (And Nothing On),' which you'll know is saying a lot if you've heard 'Queen of the Supermarket.'"

— Stephen M. Deusner, *Paste*

LAND OF HOPE AND DREAMS

"It may be a sign of how hard optimism is to come by that Springsteen covers himself by reviving 'Land of Hope and Dreams' to insist all is not lost. He makes a glorious case. The new arrangement is Phil Spector gone to church with help from Curtis Mayfield."

— David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*

"An upbeat anthem to end them all... centering its theme of brotherhood on the Impressions classic 'People Get Ready.'"

— Bernard Perusse, *The Gazette* (Canada)

"Befitting its scaffold of worshipful vocals, swell-and-contract dynamics, and triumphant sax (courtesy the late Clarence Clemons), the song documents the feel—the unrealized vision of—a just society."

— Spencer Kornhaber, *The Atlantic*

"Did he have to emphasize the beautiful 'Land of Hope and Dreams' with a gospel choir and that large awful drumming from the 1980s?"

— Olivier Nuc, *Le Figaro* (France)

"Cartoonishly austere American clichés, all aboard!"

— Chris Richards, *The Washington Post*

WE ARE ALIVE

"Springsteen takes on mortality with grace, casting those who've paid the ultimate price for the American Dream (even though they didn't reach it) as a posthumous rooting section. Life ends, but dreams don't, and neither does the opportunity for progress and redemption. That's integral to the deeper patriotism Springsteen has talked about before."

— Jonathan Pont, *Backstreets.com*

"Great, great... Bruce summons the ghosts of the oppressed, the martyred and the forgotten of American life and gathers them around a campfire for a brilliant Mariachi meets Irish folk song ... Then he sets off into the sunset, whistling with the promise of a better, brighter day."

— Alan Corr, *RTÉ* (Ireland)

"(The) dead live on, their souls and spirits rising from the grave to 'stand shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart' because in Springsteen's world, not even death can keep a good man down."

— Ed Masley, *The Arizona Republic*

"...a moving homage to the spirit of resistance of the disinherited."

— Óscar Bellot, *ABC.es* (Spain)

"Springsteen samples the country classic 'Ring of Fire,' and he places the countless dead within its ring, which is a ring of love."

— Louis P. Masur, *Popmatters.com*

"Weird, but it works."

— Phil Sutcliffe, *Mojo* (U.K.)

**SWALLOWED UP (In The Belly Of The Whale)

"...is wrenching with its hauntingly empty arrangement."

— Glenn Gamboa, *Newsday*

"...sounds like Springsteen knocking on Tom Waits' door."

— Jonathan Pont, *Backstreets.com*

**AMERICAN LAND

"...one of the best of the total 13-song bonus track package—the song kicks it big time."

— Kenneth E. Oquist, *Artsandentertainmentplayground.com*

Thanks to Mille Kim, Joakim Rickard Drugge, Christine Shaffer, Gabriela Magats, Heikki Nylund, Maria Tillema, Leticia Lozano, Giovanna Drago, May-Trine Hauan, and Grey Drane for translations contributing to this survey's international flavor. 🍷

**Bonus tracks

You take the old, you make it new

"From Asbury Park" to Philly

By Shawn Poole

After its immensely successful extended run of almost two years in Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum [see *Backstreets* #89], *From Asbury Park to the Promised Land* came to the streets of Philadelphia. Subtitled *The Life and Music of Bruce Springsteen*, the museum exhibit received a 2012 reboot for an additional six-month stay at Philadelphia's National Constitution Center (NCC). Drawing thousands of visitors, it's now ranked among the NCC's top three feature exhibits of the past five years, quickly becoming the number-one net-revenue-generating exhibit in NCC history.

"We weren't planning on touring it," said Jim Henke, curator of the Hall of Fame's original presentation, while in Philadelphia for opening week at the NCC. "[But] then some folks from the Constitution Center came to Cleveland and saw the exhibit, and they started the conversation. They said they'd really like to take the exhibit and asked if we'd be interested in traveling it... [I]t made sense because Bruce is from this region... and such an American artist. So I thought it made sense to come here, and when I approached Bruce's management and discussed it with them, they were in agreement. Right now, we have



no plans to travel it after this museum closes it."

To take another look at the *From Asbury Park to the Promised Land* in its second and seemingly final home, *Backstreets* spoke with Erin McLeary, Exhibit Developer for the National Constitution Center.

As the person primarily responsible for re-designing the exhibit for its Philly run, can you tell us a bit about what was changed and why?

Well, any time you take an exhibit from another venue, there are both practical and intellectual things that you need to

think about. There are the differences in your galleries, for instance. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame had a really fantastic spiral-shaped gallery; we have a triangular-shaped gallery. So we knew right off that we were going to need to make some changes that would just help people work through the exhibit in our space.

We also really wanted to bring out elements for NCC visitors that were present in the Rock Hall version, [but that] we wanted to highlight a little bit more: Springsteen as a songwriter who really has been examining the American experience... that

gap between the ideals of the American dream and the reality of the American dream for many people. As he has said, it's an element that's been present in many of Springsteen's songs, and it really speaks to what we try to examine here at the Constitution Center: the ways in which Springsteen as a songwriter has been examining issues of social justice, the way in which his songs work as social commentary. Not as a political commentator, but someone who is really using songwriting to look at the ways in which we as individuals and as a country both live up to our ideals and fail our ideals.



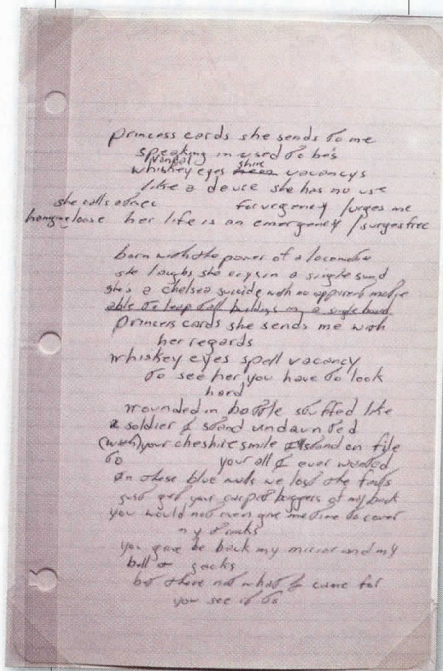
What were some of the specific changes that helped to bring out those elements?

One of the practical changes that we made is that we added section introductions to guide people through our gallery. We looked very carefully at what the Rock Hall had already done and moved a lot of content around and sort of “up a level.” Some things that used to be in label captions we brought up to a higher level: physically bigger type on the wall, with more prominent placing. We particularly looked for those moments that spoke to our mission, where Springsteen was reflecting upon or engaging with these ideas about the American dream. We looked through biographies, interviews, etc., to identify places where he himself was speaking about what he was trying to do—so Springsteen’s own words are far more prominent in the Constitution Center’s version. On the walls are very evocative quotes where he speaks about what he’s trying to achieve; we really threaded his voice throughout the entire exhibit.

Big highlights of this exhibit, of course, are Bruce’s notebook pages, which fans love to pore over and see how the songs evolved. Here at the NCC you have some different notebook pages than those that were displayed in Cleveland. How did that come about?

Many of the items in this exhibit are pretty delicate. Paper, for one thing, will decay over

time as it’s exposed to light. Things like the notebooks, even though they’re these sort of cheap “dollar” notebooks, have become museum objects; they’re



quite precious. So just on a practical level, you need to turn the pages in those notebooks so that you’re not shedding light on the same pages all of the time. In several cases, the same artifact is here but the pages have been turned, so people see a different song than they saw in Cleveland. We turned the pages in the scrapbooks, as well. It provides something a little bit new to the show on a subtle level, but again, it’s done for a very practical reason.

How much did you think about possible differences between the kinds of visitors that the Rock and Roll Hall

of Fame regularly receives and at least some of the visitors who attend the NCC, who may not be as familiar with Springsteen’s career or even rock history in general?

We thought a lot about that, and what our audience might need added to help them make sense of an exhibit about a musician, and, really, free expression, which is what this exhibit’s all about at its core. We also thought that we’d probably get a big regional audience—a lot of people from the Philly/NJ area— even though we also get a national audience, obviously, since we’re on Independence Mall.

We wanted to really bring out Philadelphia’s role in promoting Bruce’s career in the early days, the really prominent role that venues like the Tower Theater and the Main Point in Bryn Mawr played in those very early days of touring. In particular I thought, “You know, there might be people here who were at some of those shows.” We have a flyer from one of the Main Point shows from 1974, and it would make my day if a visitor who was at that show, or listened to that radio broadcast, comes through and sees that and has that moment of personal connection.

Of course, it’s a running joke over the years that the number of people who claim to have been at any given Main Point show would never have fit into the place on a single night.

Right, right [laughs]. Well, if somebody is telling their family or their date that they were

at that show, that’s on their conscience, not ours! [laughs] We did think a lot about the types of visitors we tend to get in the summer, which are family groups. We wanted to make this show accessible not just to the fans, but also their loved ones who may be dragged along. So we spent a little more time contextualizing Springsteen, again trying to use his own words wherever possible... sort of rounding him out, including information that the “real fan” will know already, but that the more casual visitors off of Independence Mall might need. We also thought about younger visitors who might be hearing about Springsteen for the first time or might know him as “something my Dad listens to.” We tried to build in that context through our public programs and student guide, providing points of connection for those younger visitors who might not have a great familiarity with his music.

That’s important, for sure, though the number of younger fans actually has grown a lot over this past decade or so. His concerts have become very much multigenerational, often family-gathering-type events, with kids and even grandkids having become big fans themselves.

Quite true, and on that note, it took us about six minutes to find an intern for this show [laughs]. A 20-year-old college student who grew up going to Springsteen concerts with her dad got “converted” by her parents and is really passionate about his music. It was great to have someone working on this, even in a limited capacity, who could speak to younger listeners’ interests.



MICHAEL ZORN PHOTOS

Wrecking Ball promos, singles & more

Let Me See What You've Got

By Peter Schoefboeck

Before we greet the new year with *High Hopes*, let's round up releases from Bruce Springsteen's highly praised 17th studio album, *Wrecking Ball*. The album's first single, "We Take Care of Our Own," became officially available on iTunes, Amazon and YouTube on January 19, 2012. The same day, the song was released to radio stations on one-track promotional CD-Rs in both the U.K. and the U.S., with either variants utilizing the black-and-white artwork originally posted on bruce.springsteen.net. The British disc came in a stickered clear plastic sleeve with a folded picture inlay, while its American counterpart featured standard slim jewel case packaging and a picture insert listing full recording credits for the song (right down to the individual players of the NY String Section) on the rear. A third issue from Japan sporting slightly adapted artwork appeared a few weeks later and, not surprisingly, has turned out by far the most difficult of this bunch for collectors to locate.

Shortly after the new material leaked on the internet (about two weeks prior to *Wrecking Ball*'s actual release), a pair of alleged promo CD-R singles for both the title track and "Jack of All Trades" surfaced on eBay. These were obvious fakes that seasoned collectors didn't fall for

and thus quickly faded back into obscurity. (The same goes for a two-CD-R set of the March 9 SiriusXM broadcast from New York's Apollo Theater some bootlegger tried to pass off as an official promotional item, also with little success.) In April and May, respectively, "Death to My Hometown" and "Rocky Ground" were picked as additional radio airplay singles for the U.K. market, distributed on one-track CD-Rs that are, for a change, absolutely legit.

The three physical configurations of the *Wrecking Ball* album itself included a standard CD, a special edition CD (containing two exclusive bonus tracks), and a double-LP vinyl set. Both compact disc formats came in nicely designed cardboard digipaks, the special edition being an oversized, 6-inch x 5.5-inch package with a larger booklet including two additional photos and lyrics to the extra songs. Since the difference in retail prices between the two was fairly miniscule (usually less than \$2), one can almost assume that a large number of buyers purchasing the basic 11-track disc were completist collectors who naturally needed to get their hands on *both* versions—not to mention the Japanese pressings (which again had the vertical obi strips and lyric translation booklets added to their respective packaging) and further, even more exotic variants from Taiwan and Korea.

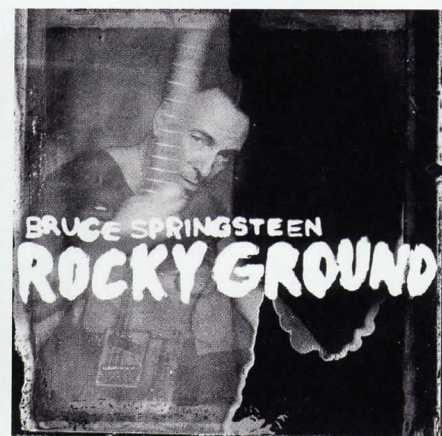
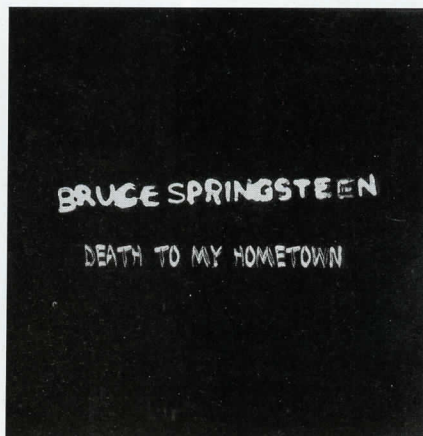
With *Wrecking Ball* displaying what many fans—including this writer—consider the best artwork seen on a regular Springsteen studio album in years (handled by art directors Dave Bett and Michelle Holme, who previously won a Grammy for their outstanding design work on Bruce's *The Promise: The Darkness on the Edge of Town* story box set), its release on two 180-gram vinyl LPs is a particularly delightful affair. While the outer jacket is not a gatefold, the records are housed inside glossy picture/lyric inner sleeves, utilizing some of Danny Clinch's excellent black-and-white photography from the CD booklet blown up to full 12-inch glory. For the first time, instead of the oft-problematic mp3 download codes previously included with LP issues of *Working on a Dream* and *The Promise*, the *Wrecking Ball* vinyl contained a free physical CD copy of the (standard 11-track) album, slipped into a plain white paper sleeve.

In terms of full-length promotional releases, *Wrecking Ball* (minus bonus songs) was distributed on watermarked advance CD-Rs in the U.K., accompanied by a basic track listing insert that featured a typo of "You've Got It All." Both the discs and inserts were individually numbered, also carrying the recipients' names as well as the respective publications they represented. No such strict security measures

were taken for the typically bare-bones U.S. album promo, which came in a plain red die-cut Columbia logo sleeve and is about as exciting to look at as a wet slice of bread. In Denmark, domestic press and record stores were supplied with a special DVD that carried not only the music but also the song lyrics in "video" form. Said visuals were of a rather generic nature, consisting merely of white text on a black background (however, the disc's menu interestingly does reveal a December 9, 2011 "download date" from Gateway Mastering and still refers to the album as *Bruce Springsteen - Untitled Project*).

Actual physical media promoting Bruce's project was no longer made available everywhere: a source from New Zealand working in local radio tells us that, instead of a CD or DVD, he just received an e-mail from Sony with a personally coded URL embedded, enabling him to download the songs in either mp3 or .wav formats along with digital versions of the album's artwork and liner notes.

The April 2012 Record Store Day campaign again came in handy for Columbia/Sony to give their new Springsteen "product" an extra promotional boost, resulting in another exclusive, limited-edition 7-inch vinyl single produced solely for this occasion. With "Rocky Ground" as the A-side, and the full-band



live rendition of "The Promise" recorded during the December 2010 showcase at Asbury Park's Carousel House (unique to this release in audio-only form) on its flip, the 45 boasts a very attractive picture sleeve, sporting a stylized black-and-white version of Danny Clinch's Bruce shot from the *Wrecking Ball* CD booklet cover.

Even more interesting (and circulated in much larger numbers) is a second 7-inch pressing of "Rocky Ground" that was made specifically for promotional distribution with the May 2012 issue of German *Rolling Stone* magazine, which was sold as a "Bruce Springsteen Package" and also contained a 52-page supplement dedicated entirely to our man (who appeared on the cover of the regular mag as well). In addition to employing totally different sleeve artwork to the Record Store Day single, the *Rolling Stone* disc is one-sided and has Springsteen's signature engraved into the B-side vinyl, making for a particularly distinctive, extremely cool collectible.

Moving beyond the subject of *Wrecking Ball*, let's catch up with some other recent items that didn't make last issue's column. First off, the November 16, 2010 episode of *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon* that featured Bruce as both an interviewee and musical performer (see *Backstreets* #90 for a full report), was released on an official screener DVD shipped to Emmy Award voters "for their consideration" in the spring of 2011. The disc came inside a lovely, full-color cardboard picture sleeve depicting Springsteen and Fallon on both sides: scruffy 1975-model Bruce alongside the

host's Neil Young impersonation for their duet of "Whip My Hair" on one side, and a photo of the two holding Springsteen's legendary Fender Esquire on the other. That performance subsequently got a commercial release, appearing on Fallon's comedy album *Blow Your Pants Off*. ("Young Bruce" and "Neil" reteamed in 2012 for "Sexy and I Know It," which remains unreleased.)

Meanwhile the *real* Neil Young celebrated the 25-year anniversary of his Bridge School benefit project (a special fund in support of children suffering from severe speech and physical impairments) with commemorative two-CD and three-DVD releases entitled—you guessed it—*The Bridge School Concerts: 25th Anniversary Edition*. Distributed by Warner Reprise, both formats contain Bruce's memorable debut solo acoustic performance of "Born in the U.S.A." that was recorded during the first of these annual live events (held at Shoreline Amphitheater in Mountain View, California on October 13, 1986) and had been previously available as an iTunes download only. All profits from the sales are going directly to the Bridge School organization.

A more recent benefit, 12.12.12. *The Concert for Sandy Relief*, saw release right away. One month after the broadcast telethon, a DVD and 2CD set captured highlights from the Madison Square Garden event, with Springsteen and the E Street Band's set represented by "Land of Hope and Dreams" and "Wrecking Ball." What didn't make the cut for home release: "My City of Ruins," "Born to Run," and Bruce guesting with Bon Jovi on

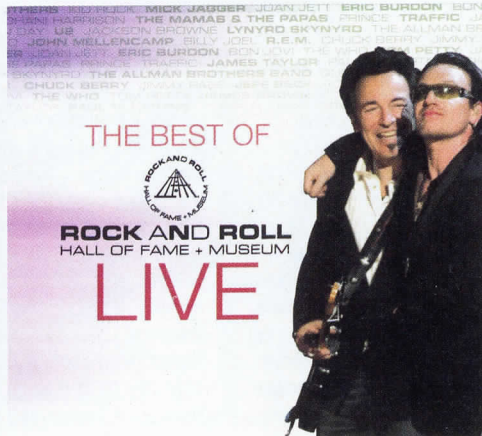


The one-sided single for "Rocky Ground" issued by Rolling Stone Germany, featuring Springsteen's autograph etched on the flipside.

"Who Says You Can't Go Home." Proceeds from these discs benefit the Robin Hood Relief Fund.

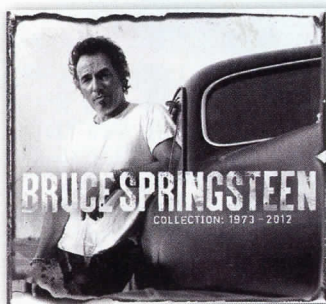
Following their highly regarded 2010 25th Anniversary *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Concerts* releases, Time-Life has come up with another compilation that is of great interest to Springsteen fans. *The Best of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame + Museum Live*, issued in the U.S. only in November 2011, collects a total of 51 recordings on three CDs from various Hall of Fame induction ceremonies and related events. Bruce once again is all over the place here:

in addition to the songs performed with the E Street Band at his own March 1999 induction ("Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," "The Promised Land," a duet of "In the Midnight Hour" with Wilson Pickett), Springsteen also appears as a musical guest accompanying several other honored artists (including Chuck Berry, Mick Jagger, John Fogerty, and U2) through the years. The set's discs, accompanied by a 12-page booklet, are placed inside a cardboard digipak which employs a live shot of Bruce and Bono (taken during their joint rendition of U2's "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" from the night the band entered the Hall back in 2005) and fit into an extra outer slipcase. ▶



Springsteen reteamed with fellow Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Pete Seeger for a track on 2012's *A More Perfect Union*, a Seeger/Lorre Wyatt collaboration subtitled "New songs by old friends." Kicking off the album, "God's Counting on Me... God's Counting on You" is a response to the Gulf oil spill.

The 2003 *Essential Bruce Springsteen* sampler (in its two-disc form, sans "rarities" bonus CD) was reissued yet again in the European markets last fall, now featuring alternate artwork (an Eric Meola *Born to Run* cover outtake shot), while Sony Japan recently included four titles from Bruce's back catalog (*Born to Run*, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *The River*, and *Born in the U.S.A.*), all housed inside mini-LP cardboard sleeves) in their January 2012 "Life Changing Music" line of classic rock albums.



Besides *Essential*, Springsteen has multiple *Greatest Hits* albums: the first from 1995, and newer configurations credited to Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band in 2009. This year, Columbia packaged yet another "best of," a career sampler titled *Collection: 1973-2012*. The 18-track comp gathers studio tracks, sequenced chronologically, from Bruce's second album ("Rosalita") through his 17th ("We Take Care of Our Own," "Wrecking Ball"). Initially a promotional item in the U.S., in a cardboard picture sleeve for the MusiCares Person of the Year event, *Collection: 1973-2012* also had a commercial release internationally, including an "Australian Tour Edition" coinciding with the 2013 jaunt *Down Under*. 🇺🇸

Additional reporting by Mark Bahlen, Domingo Bauza, Alessandro Cattaneo, Henrik Hemdrup, Jeremy Parkinson, Christopher Phillips, Josef Schrefel, Mike Simpson and Jyrki Virta.

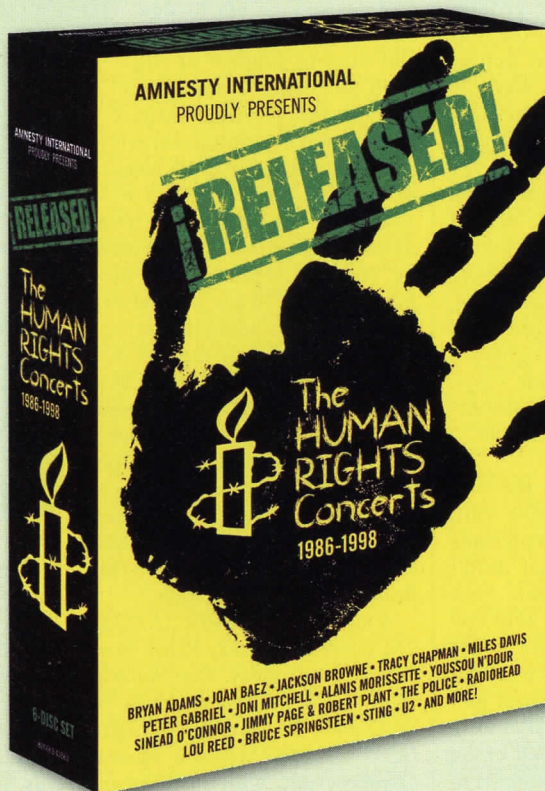
Amnesty International has commemorated the 65th anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights—December 10, 2013—in a series of new releases anchored by a multi-artist, 6-DVD box set with several companion CD sets and digital-audio-downloads. Including many performances by Bruce Springsteen, almost all of this material is seeing its first official release in any home video and/or audio format. Net proceeds from all sales will benefit Amnesty International.

Appropriately, the series is entitled *Released!* It was produced by Martin Lewis, a longtime Amnesty producer and activist who co-created and produced the first major series of comedy and music galas in support of Amnesty in 1970s/80s London, famously titled "The Secret Policeman's Ball." Lewis also had a hand in co-conceiving the 1988 Amnesty world tour that first brought Bruce Springsteen on board the human rights caravan. He refers to Jack Healey (Executive Director of Amnesty USA 1981-1993), the late Bill Graham (Healey's co-producer on the '86 and '88 Amnesty tours), and the late Blair Gibb (Amnesty's planning officer who produced its '98 Paris concert) as under-sung heroes behind the scenes. Lewis also credits Springsteen co-managers Jon Landau and Barbara Carr for what he describes as their "integral contributions to the success of the 1988 tour."

Backstreets recently got to discuss the *Released!* series with Lewis, who is a longtime Springsteen fan. His first show was also his very memorable first night on U.S. soil: Bruce's July 30, 1974 Columbia Records showcase gig at Los Angeles' legendary Troubadour club. Lewis has several other strong E Street connections, too. Little Steven picked him to be the first host of the morning-drive show for the Underground Garage satellite-radio channel. ("I was on

opposite Howard Stern and became the first DJ in radio history to have *minus* half a million listeners a day!") He also served as catalyst and executive producer for Nils Lofgren's and Paul Rodgers' version of "Abandoned Love" on *Chimes of Freedom: The Songs of Bob Dylan, Honoring 50 Years of Amnesty International*.

Lewis told us of his difficult labor of love in assembling the *Released!* Series' 6-DVD anchor set, subtitled *The HUMAN RIGHTS Concerts 1986-1998*.



"In 2010 I started," said Lewis, "and I realized that it was going to be a monumental undertaking. Because Amnesty is a human rights organization and, bless them, they are not in the entertainment business. Therefore, preserving audio and video materials is not their forte. They had the materials, but they were scattered to the four winds—and when I would get the materials, I would then find that there were things missing... or there'd be a terrible glitch on the tape. So I literally was searching the world. I was going to broadcasters who'd put out things over the years to see if they had a copy. In one instance, I had a hole in the [*Human Rights Now!* concert film] and I was only able to fill it when I found the Hungarian [broadcast] version! It

really was a patchwork quilt; we were drawing from every which way, and it took me a solid two years of gathering the materials from everywhere."

Lewis then began the painstaking process of digitally restoring the audio and video elements. "I spent quite a bit of time talking to [longtime Springsteen record mixer] Bob Clearmountain, getting advice from him about what we could and shouldn't do." The end result is a series of releases providing the best-looking and best-sounding versions of this historic material that have ever been available.

In the 6-DVD set, there is Springsteen/E Street Band-related content to be found on every disc. Here's the complete rundown:

DVD 1, 1986 A Conspiracy of Hope Concert, part 1: Steven Van Zandt accompanies Bob Geldof on the set's opening performance, a stirring cover of Bob Marley's "Redemption Song." Martin Lewis notes, "I took [this performance] out of [the original concert-recording sequence] and put it right at the beginning... because I felt it was somehow fitting that Geldof, an alumnus of 'The Secret Policeman's Ball,' Band Aid, and Live Aid, and Steven, fresh from 'Sun City,' should be seen

and heard together at the beginning. They were setting the tone; they were the invocation."

Van Zandt also performs "Los Desaperacidos" and "Native American" with his '86 lineup of The Disciples of Soul, featuring Scialfa/Springsteen collaborator Steve Jordan on drums, Darlene Love on background vocals, and *Late Show with David Letterman*'s Paul Shaffer on keyboards. Afterwards, they all back Bob Geldof on "In the Pouring Rain." Jackson Browne also performs an uplifting version of Van Zandt's "I Am a Patriot," which he dedicates to still-imprisoned Native American activist Leonard Peltier.

DVD 2, 1986 A Conspiracy of Hope Concert, part 2: Van Zandt joins Rubén Blades, Nona Hendrix,

FROM THE WEST UNTO THE EAST, IT IS iRELEASED!

Springsteen's Amnesty International work comes home with new DVD packages, CD sets, and downloads

LEN WRAMISIT PHOTO

Lou Reed, and U2 in performing "Sun City." Everyone also joins in on the "I Shall Be Released" finale.

DVD 3, The complete Human Rights Now! 1988 concert film: Broadcast in the U.S. by HBO in December 1988, this cornerstone document features performances by Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band from the tour's final date, October 15, 1988, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (This show, incidentally, ended Bruce's final tour with The E Street Band until the 1999-2000 Reunion Tour.) The performances that were broadcast: "Born in the U.S.A.," "I'm on Fire," "The River" (with Sting and Shankar), "Raise Your Hand," and "Twist and Shout/La Bamba" (with Peter Gabriel, Youssou N'Dour and Sting; Sting's band members include Branford Marsalis and former E Streeter David Sancious).

Bruce also duets with Sting on "Every Breath You Take" and joins the rest of the bill on the "Chimes of Freedom" finale and the opening and closing versions of "Get Up, Stand Up." Bruce and various E Streeters are a major presence throughout the film's other edited segments of performances, press conferences, interviews and behind-the-scenes action.

DVD 4, Context On The Human Rights Concerts, Part One: Bruce appears with his fellow artists on the Human Rights Now! Tour in the "Five Musicians - Five Continents" HBO promotional mini-documentary (featuring footage not included in the finished film) and in two previously unreleased performances from the tour: "Get Up, Stand Up" from Montreal 9/17/1988 (with guest artists Daniel Lavoie and Michel Rivard) and "Chimes of Freedom" from Los Angeles 9/21/1988 (with guest

artists Joan Baez and Bono). Steve Van Zandt also is seen in a 1986 interview in the mini-doc "Meet The Conspirators!"

DVD 5, The complete The Struggle Continues... television special from the December 10, 1998 Paris concert: Bruce performs "Get Up, Stand Up" with Tracy Chapman, Peter Gabriel and Youssou N'Dour and also delivers solo acoustic performances of "No Surrender," "Born in the U.S.A.," and "Working on the Highway."

DVD 6, Context on the Human Rights Concerts, Part Two: Segments from a new interview with Springsteen (a very moving and revealing conversation with Lewis in Munich on May 26, 2013, shortly before Bruce's concert that same day) are woven into the newly produced documentary *Light a Candle! The Story Behind "The Human Rights Concerts."* A dedicated 20-minute sequence of Springsteen's interview, entitled *No Retreat: Bruce Springsteen's Enduring Support for Human Rights*, is also featured.

One of the segments from a new in-depth interview with Sting (conducted by Lewis in April 2013) features Sting's take on the famous "dress-up-like-Bruce" onstage prank pulled by Gabriel and Sting on the last night of the Human Rights Now! Tour. Finally, in the *Legacy of the Human Rights Concerts (Post-1998)* section, Lewis kept aside one additional moment from his conversation with Bruce to serve as an "Easter-egg"-style introduction to the Lewis-produced music video for Pete Seeger's 2012 performance of "Forever Young," recorded for *Chimes of Freedom: The Songs of Bob Dylan, Honoring 50 Years of Amnesty International*.

While the U.S. and U.K. editions of the *iReleased!*

DVD box share the same exact digital content, the U.K. edition features different, gatefold-style packaging, a few additional photos, and some more detailed liner notes in the accompanying booklet.

There also was a one-DVD distillation of the box-set, entitled *Get Up! Stand Up! Highlights From The Human Rights Concerts 1986-1998*, issued prior to the box's release [pictured right].

The U.S./U.K. version of *Get Up! Stand Up!* doesn't offer anything that's not already included in the box. The Japanese version, however, includes four additional performances currently not included on any other DVD compilation, including "Sanctuary" performed by Little Steven & the Disciples of Soul. A Japanese version of the *iReleased!* DVD box (with U.S.-style packaging) will soon be available and will include those four additional performances as well. (NOTE: All UK-originated DVDs are NTSC and region-free [Region Code 0]; therefore they should also play just fine on any U.S. device that plays DVDs. All Japan-originated DVD packages, however, are or will be NTSC - Region Code 2 and will play only on devices that can play Region 2 DVDs. Consult your device's manual if necessary.)

Some of Bruce's and Little Steven's Amnesty performances have also been included on the U.S. 2-CD set entitled *iReleased! - Highlights of the Human Rights Concerts*. Similar highlights sets have also been released on CD using the main title *Get Up! Stand Up!* instead of *iReleased!*, with a few



Lewis & Springsteen, Munich 2013.

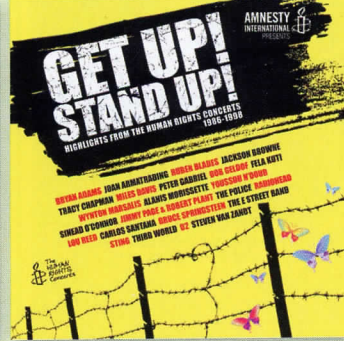
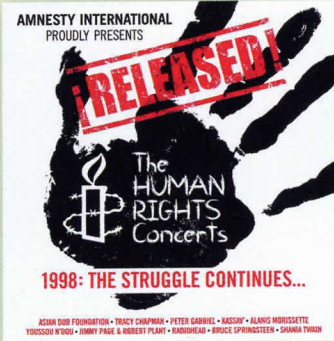
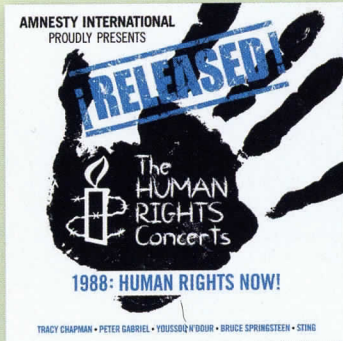
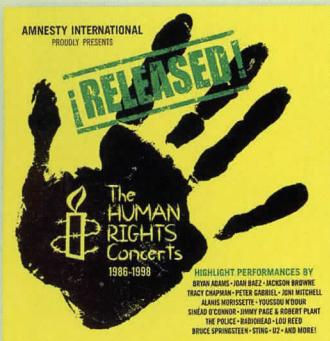
alternate tracks.

Of much more interest to Springsteen fans—or anyone who prefers a complete document to highlights—is the series of *iReleased! The Human Rights Concerts* U.K.-only 2-CD sets. Separate sets for the 1988 and 1998 shows [pictured below, blue and red respectively] contain audio for all of Bruce's performances broadcast in the 1988 *Human Rights Now!* film and the 1998 *The Struggle Continues* television special.

Finally, completists can obtain audio-only versions of all DVD performances (excepting "Get Up, Stand Up" from Montreal 9/17/1988 and "Chimes of Freedom" from Los Angeles 9/21/1988, but including the four performances available only on the Japanese *Get Up! Stand Up!* DVD.) The only way it can be done, however, is by purchasing a combination of U.S., U.K. and Japanese CDs, along with additional digital downloads. Fortunately, a very convenient listing of full details and ordering links to obtain all items in all available formats can be found online at CryBabyCry.biz.

Further details and an online history of Amnesty events through the years also can be found at HumanRightsConcerts.com.

—Shawn Poole



Los Angeles, CA
April 27, 2012



BECAUSE THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

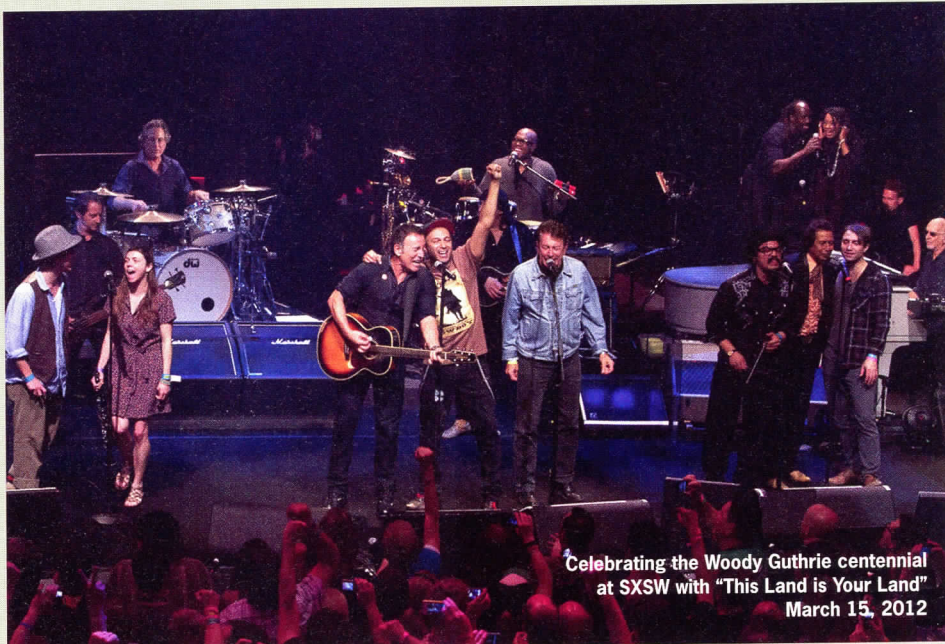
THE BACKSTREETS INTERVIEW WITH TOM MORELLO

THE E STREET BAND is in need. Steve Van Zandt has places to be, things to do. And while Bruce Springsteen is understanding, he's still left with a guitar-shaped hole to fill—and a tour is imminent.

Luckily, Bruce knows a guy who happens to be one of the greatest, most technically proficient, hardest-working guitar players in rock... a guy who has spent two decades recording and touring, with bands and as a solo artist... who happens to be nothing but honored to step in as a sideman for Springsteen. That man's name: Nils Lofgren.

So maybe it wasn't completely uncharted territory when Tom Morello was tapped to join the E Street Band for their 2013 tour of Australia. But it was an astounding move nonetheless, forming this cross-generation supergroup with Morello—known for sonically experimental, post-hip-hop, hard-rock riffage in *Rage Against the Machine* and *Audioslave*—for complete shows on the other side of the world.

Morello had certainly been road-tested with the E Street Band. Beginning on the *Magic* tour, he joined them on several occasions for a newly intensified "The Ghost of Tom Joad," sort of a hybrid of the E Street Band and *Rage Against the Machine* versions. (Prompted by Morello, *Rage* had developed a blistering arrangement of "Joad" before the turn of the millenium.) Springsteen's 1995 song, along with the associated album and tour, is a real touchstone for Morello, not only providing that great moment for *Rage* but also inspiring and influencing his continuing solo work as *The Nightwatchman*.



Celebrating the Woody Guthrie centennial at SXSW with "This Land is Your Land" March 15, 2012

Morello and Springsteen first performed "Joad" together with the E Street Band on April 7, 2008, in Anaheim, when Bruce introduced "Tommy" as a close friend. With the two sharing vocals, the band hitting hard, Tom lighting it all up with guitar pyrotechnics, it was a team-up and a performance that blew minds and soon went a bit viral. Morello returned the following night for a reprise, and they revisited the track together on multiple occasions in the years that followed: in Los Angeles on the *Working on a Dream* tour, in New York at Madison Square Garden for Pete Seeger's 90th birthday celebration, and for the 25th Anniversary Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Concerts.

Wrecking Ball stepped up the collaboration. In October 2011, with his latest *Nightwatchman* album, *Worldwide Rebel Songs*, freshly released, Morello was

also in the studio contributing lead guitar to two songs for Springsteen's record. When time came to get out there and promote *Wrecking Ball*, there he was with the E Street Band and The Roots on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*: stomping along to "Death to My Hometown," revisiting his solo on "Jack of All Trades." He told *Backstreets* soon after the March 2, 2012 performance, "It was incredible... I couldn't even count the number of musicians on stage, and yet it felt like a real cohesive whole rather than just a scrambled-up jam."

A third song performed that night, "The E Street Shuffle," gave a taste of things to come, throwing Tom in the deep end: "I didn't know... I mean, I was familiar with the song 'The E Street Shuffle,' but I didn't know how to play it—nobody sent me that memo," Morello continued, laughing. "I didn't get that text before I flew to New York City. So we're standing on stage and Bruce is like, 'Okay, now we're gonna do 'E Street Shuffle.'" This is rehearsal, that day—

BY CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS

we're probably four hours before show-time—and I'm like, 'Okaaay...' It's a rather complicated song."

That kind of on-the-job training would be a hallmark of Morello's run in Australia, where he would be tackling new songs every night, many of them on the fly.

That night on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* was also the first time that Morello had essentially played the role of E Street Bandmate, rather than featured soloist. "When I played with the E Street Band before on 'Ghost of Tom Joad,' it's really just playing solos," he told us. "I don't play too much rhythm guitar—that was the first time I played a lot of rhythm guitar. I don't know if anybody else in the E Street Band uses a Marshall amp; it certainly gave it a rocking bottom! But that was so much fun. Between those three songs... the totality of human emotion was captured between those three jams."

The Wrecking Ball rolled on, a March 15, 2012 tour warm-up at SXSW in Austin once again bringing Tom to the stage. Along with

"Joad," Morello also played on "Death to My Hometown" and "Jack of All Trades"; he sang a verse on "This Land Is Your Land." In L.A., he was on stage for another four or five songs each night. And again in London. And in Chicago. Calls for him to just go ahead and join the E Street Band, which kicked in around the time of the Fallon broadcast, no longer felt only semi-serious.

Morello spoke with *Backstreets* twice for this feature, both times before his Oz excursion was on the table—or his return trip planned for 2014, or his major contributions to *High Hopes*. But we did pose the question: "If asked, would you serve?" Tom laughed, indicating he had a few things of his own going on. But when pressed, with what seemed a bit of a ridiculous question at the time, he admitted he was more than game: "I would consider it such an honor to play with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, and if asked, I will serve."

Here we present the *Backstreets* Interview with Tom Morello, clearly a man of his word.

When I came on board with *Backstreets*, it was almost 20 years ago—it was 1993, and I was 22. You know, at the time, there was very little that was "cool" about Springsteen. He had just done *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, and soon he went on to do the *Tom Joad* thing, and I knew a lot of people my age who had written Bruce off, or didn't get it, or didn't care. When Rage Against the Machine put out that single for "The Ghost of Tom Joad," that was pretty inspiring to me as one of the first real signs that a younger generation of listeners and musicians were getting it. Can you speak to that?

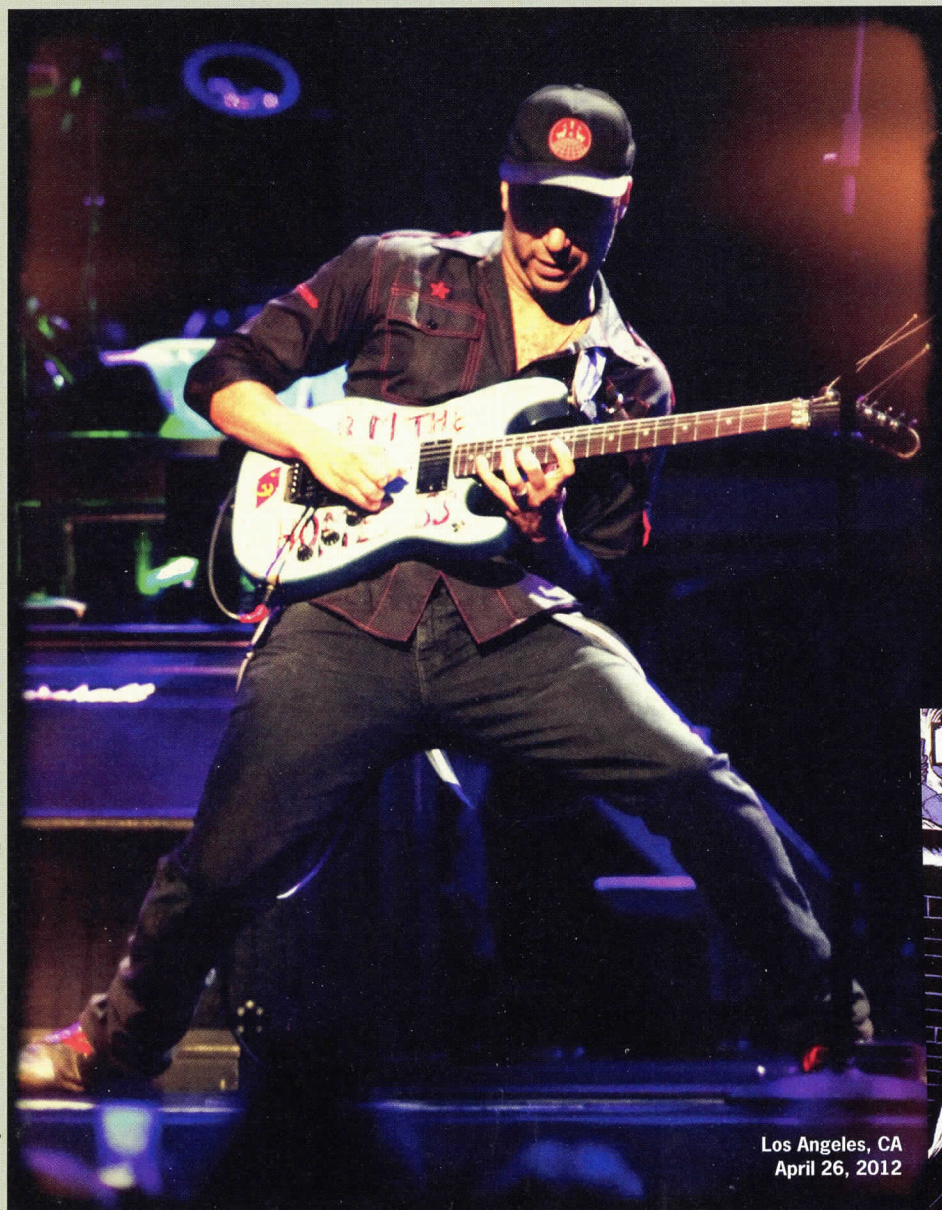
Well, I was a huge fan of the *Tom Joad* record. And when Rage was opening up for U2 on their 1997 PopMart tour, we had a limited amount of time to rehearse, and we wanted to inject something new into our set. So I brought out a cassette tape of this acoustic Bruce Springsteen record at the rehearsal. I think they thought I was crazy. I said, "Hear me out.... Let's take the lyrics from this song and Rage Against the Machine-ize it."

It sounded pretty great in the room, and we played that on all of the U2 dates. And you could see many of these U2 fans who were not Rage Against the Machine fans all of a sudden light up when they'd recognize the lyrics. They'd be scratching their heads like, "How does *this* band know *that* song?"

That was actually the first time that I had any contact with Bruce—we had to get his approval. So, as a Bruce fan, I was very nervous about what he'd think of it. But he was happy, I think, to hear a band like Rage Against the Machine, with our audience, covering his song.

My first transformative live experience—the first time I saw Bruce and was really bowled over—was the *Tom Joad* Tour. I think I saw the Wiltern show and the Santa Barbara show, and I was very moved by how heavy and powerful a solo acoustic performance could be. That definitely laid the seeds for my later *Nightwatchman* work.

Because until then, my live experience with acoustic singer/songwriters was always some dreary Kumbaya business [laughs].



Los Angeles, CA
April 26, 2012





Anaheim, CA
December 4, 2012

Joni Mitchell was a tremendous talent, but people in coffeehouses who want to be Joni Mitchell are unbearable. And I thought it could be done in a very different way.

Right. Those Joad shows were very intense, very dark. I think they asked a lot of the audience—but when the audience played along, you got an incredible show.

Yeah. It cut to the core of what I liked best about Bruce's catalog: the bleak, existential songs are my jams [laughs], and that show was pared of everything but.

But that wasn't your first Bruce tour?

No. I saw the tour with the "other band" at the L.A. Sports Arena. And I had my first exposure to—like, the first time I ever got it was when I saw the Amnesty International HBO special from Buenos Aires. That's the first time where it transformed from sort of the, "Oh my goodness, what the heck is happening in that 'Dancing in the Dark' video?" to, "Holy shit—that is awesome!" It was very moving, and the way the E Street Band was rocking that stadium....

I went out and I bought—I had very limited means at the time, and I had to choose my cassettes wisely. I bought the *Darkness on the Edge of Town* cassette; that was my first one.

And of course when you talk about the bleak songs being your jam, I also think of *Nebraska*.

Yeah, that was my second cassette. Those were my first two. They were the only two Bruce records I had for a very long time. *Darkness* really spoke [to me]—like,

I THOUGHT THE 'DARKNESS' RECORD WAS WRITTEN FOR ME.

I couldn't believe it. I had a very surface understanding of who Bruce was as an artist until I listened to that record. The *Born in the U.S.A.* marketing was sort of the polar opposite of what I was into at the time. I was a Clash fan. And a Gang of Four fan.

But the depth, and the anger, and the heaviness, and the despair in Bruce's songs—which sometimes have sort of a major key melody to them—it really spoke to my suburban Illinois experience. In such a way that I thought the *Darkness* record was written for me. [Laughs] I really couldn't believe it. In a way, I could relate it thematically to the Clash and Public Enemy. Those were the bands that kind of weaned me off my heavy metal dungeons and dragons. But *Darkness* and *Nebraska* spoke to my experience in a way that I was like, "How does he know?"

How does *Darkness* hold up for you at this point?

Oh, it's awesome. It's a record that I return to often. Between that and *Nebraska*, those are my two favorite Bruce records, but as a complete work it is probably my favorite Bruce Springsteen record.

So if you were blown away by that Amnesty broadcast, and so into those two records, you must have followed everything from there on? By the time *Tom Joad* came out...

Yeah, I was a super-fan by that point. Chuck Plotkin was actually involved in a record label that tried to sign Rage Against the Machine. So Chuck and his wife became friends [of mine]—they were good friends, and he played me *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* before they came out. Which, for a Springsteen fan—imagine that, sitting in Chuck Plotkin's living room... losing my mind [laughs].

Then I bought *The Ghost of Tom Joad* the day that it came out, and I was really blown away by it. It was even more in my dark, despairing, existential corner. I love those stories. It's beautiful and grim.

So you're drawn to that in his songs, the grim beauty... and now you're on one of his bleakest, I think: "This Depression." That can't be an accident.

Well, I did one session in the studio in Los Angeles and one in New Jersey, and I tried things on a number of songs. So when the record was finally finished, that's when I found out on which songs I actually appeared on. I played on some of the "up" numbers as well as the darker jams...

But yeah, "This Depression," it's a really beautiful song, it's a beautiful and bleak song, and I tried to conjure in that instrumental section the haunting vibe of the music.

As I told Bruce when we were in the studio, "I like the ones that make me feel bad."

THE WIZARDS OF OZ

WITH MORELLO FINALLY CLOCKING IN FULL TIME,
E STREET BAND TAKES AUSTRALIA **BY JOE WALL**

Even before we learned Tom Morello would stand in for Steven on a 10-show tour of Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and a little-used outdoor venue called Hanging Rock, it was already going to be a very different E Street Band than the one that last visited Australia in 2003

No Danny. No Big Man. (As it turned out, no Patti, either.) Four albums of never-played-in-Oz material. The addition of Jake Clemons, a horn section, backup musicians and singers. And, in Morello, a brash newcomer to E Street whose work in Rage Against the Machine and The Nightwatchman made him an overqualified gun for hire. As opening night approached a slight but gnawing apprehension mixed with the usual euphoria: How would Bruce make it all work?

Like an all-set Cobra Jet creepin' down Australia's southeast coast, that's how.

Morello's feedback ignited "We Take of Our Own" in front of 14,000 at Brisbane Entertainment Centre on opening night. Zero promotion, pigeon-holed radio playlists and an older Aussie demographic meant *Wrecking Ball* songs were virtually unknown to a majority of punters, and it showed. Slower numbers like "Jack of All Trades," "My City of Ruins," and "We Are Alive" enjoyed splendid airings on opening night but were heard only sporadically (if at all) thereafter. "Rocky Ground" never turned up at all.

The second of two Brisbane shows kicked off with a cover of Tim Scott's "High Hopes" that spotlighted Everett Bradley's bewitching percussion and Morello's channelling of



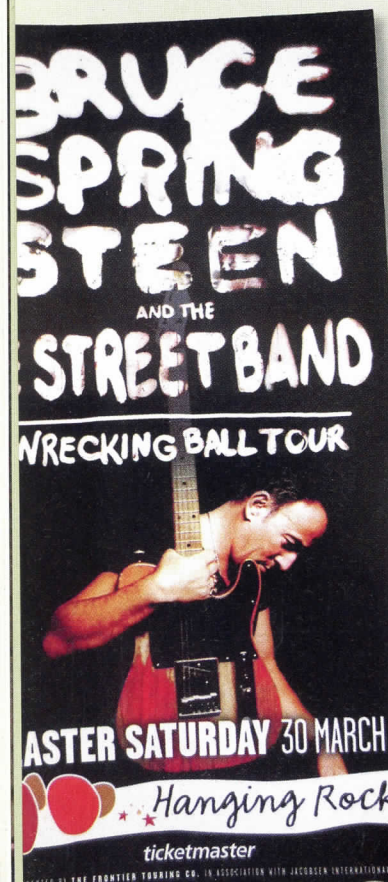
Sydney, Australia
March 22, 2013

Hendrix via his incisors. The long-dormant song, which Bruce and the E Street Band recorded in 1995, became an Oz tour staple, appearing in every subsequent show but one and provided Morello with a second showcase to go with his nightly "Ghost of Tom Joad" tour-de-force.

Night two also found Bruce combating the opening night crowd's stoicism with a perfectly pitched "your arse is gonna tell you to get up in 90

seconds" intro to "Open All Night" that became a nightly ritual—most memorably before "Pay Me My Money Down" at the first of three shows at Sydney Allphones Arena. It was the closest you'll ever get to a hootenanny in Australia and a reminder of Springsteen's singular ability to connect with an audience—in this case, 21,000 paying customers—while simultaneously telling them how to behave. Amazing.

By the second show in Sydney, it was clear Morello's newbie status wasn't holding Springsteen back from scrambling setlists during the first of consecutive three-night stands. The ten-year anniversary of the Iraq invasion prompted an opening combination of "Devils & Dust" and "Last to Die" (the first airings of songs from those respective albums in Oz) before Bruce led all assembled on a journey that included an audible "Does This Bus Stop," Australia's first version of "Jungleland" without Clarence Clemons, and a "Detroit Medley" that ended with Bruce calling for Nils to douse him with a sponge. Two nights later at the final Allphones



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Bruce Springsteen & The E-Street Band Melbourne 27/03/13

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Arena show they were on fire, with versions of "Night," "Prove It All Night" with '78 intro, and "Backstreets" that made time stand still. A celebratory "Rosalita" brought the Sydney stand to a fitting, fist-pumping close.

Melbourne delivered more blistering one-offs, but at the midway point of the Oz tour songs from *Wrecking Ball* resonated in the bones loudest and longest. This was an E Street Band built for the gospel of "Shackled and Drawn," the hurtling, horn-driven "Wrecking Ball," and snarling "Death to My Hometown"—the effect they had on 15,000-plus at Rod Laver Arena each night was palpable. When you wait so long for Bruce to tour in your isolated part of the world, it's almost foolhardy to hope for new music that matches the old, yet once again, Springsteen outdid expectations.

Also outdoing expectations was a breakneck closing-night setlist that started with never-played-in-Oz "Long Walk Home" and "Radio Nowhere." That night also brought the first E Street Band performance of "Better Days" in ten years, a chilling one-two of "Factory" and "Lost in the Flood" followed closely by Morello-powered "Youngstown" and "Murder Incorporated," a loose "I'm Goin' Down" (by request from Springsteen's twin blonde American "stalkers"), another spectacular "Jungleland" courtesy of Jake Clemons, and an encore-closing "American Land" that filled this expat's heart with gladness.

Next and last was Hanging Rock, a natural amphitheatre in the hills of Victoria about an hour's drive northwest of Melbourne. Only Rod Stewart and Leonard Cohen had played there previously, and neither of those shows had tested the venue's capabilities. Besides the usual traffic snarls and abundance of drunken yabbos, however, the weekend concerts—each with crowds of approximately 17,000—were a roaring success. A larger stage with no rear seating meant Bruce had to work harder and run farther to connect physically with the audience but, predictably, he did so without fail. A massive screen behind the stage grew brighter as twilight faded, giving punters sitting on blankets in the back clear visions of local hero Jimmy Barnes dueting with Springsteen on "Tougher than the Rest" and close-ups of men and

women who'd courageously crossed "shark... infested... waters!" to play in Australia. Bruce delivered a setlist for the ages on Sunday night, but the reality of these shows being the last in Oz until who-knows-when made every song, every gesture, every tribute to the fallen, ring more passionately and poignantly. Catharsis after so long had been worth the wait.

As Springsteen stomped and mugged through a joyous "Twist and Shout" that ended the 2013 Oz tour, it was tempting to view Jake Clemons and Tom Morello as foundations for a not-too-distant E Street Band. Bruce has always fed off the energy of others, but in Australia with Morello standing to his left and Jake back over his right shoulder he seemed supercharged. The effect spread throughout the band: by closing night in Hanging Rock, Nils was performing a solo with his teeth and passionately howling Steven's vocals while Soozie provided fiddle filler whenever Bruce was galloping back to the stage and the new, larger, and younger family it contained. Morello himself grew in stature with each show, its culmination a defiant, raised-fist vocal on "Joad" that provided a lasting image for his historic, if limited, stint on E Street.

Closing night was my eighth show of the Oz tour and included a moment of fabled E Street transcendence, the kind that makes us believe again and again, during a staggering "Incident." Under a twinkling Southern sky in the Victorian countryside, memories flooded back of the world I left behind in Asbury Park—literally, as it was my home before moving to Australia in 2006—and dozens of nights with fellow tramps in the swamps o' Jersey. On a stage bathed in blue light in a land far, far away, Bruce unleashed waves of emotion through a crying guitar, and I knew there was nowhere on Earth I'd rather be. Just like so many times before. 🐾

Bruce Springsteen & The E-Street Band | Melbourne | 26/03/13

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At what point did you and Bruce connect and become friends?

Well, we had run into each other at various functions, and I had debased myself—I hope he doesn't remember our first few meetings [laughs]. I did the gushing fan thing, and it was sort of in the aftermath of Rage doing "Tom Joad." I don't know the first time we really spent time together, but we became friends. As I've said before, he's the only friend I have who I subscribe to a magazine about [laughs].

[Laughs] I love that.

So it's always sort of difficult to look at him as a peer.... But he is as gracious in a friend setting as you would imagine.

The moment when you took the stage that first time in Anaheim [April 7, 2008], that was one of the bigger "holy shit" moments of the last ten years. That performance of "Tom Joad" blew everyone away. And I think that first one was the one they released—you're actually on a Springsteen record, a ten-inch, which is pretty cool.

That's correct—it is pretty cool, yeah!

How did that performance come together?

I ran into Bruce maybe a week or so before—I stopped by to visit Brendan O'Brien in the studio, and Bruce and Little Steven were there. He said, "You should come play with us some time." And I, you know... blushed [laughs].

Then a couple weeks later, I noticed they were actually playing in Anaheim. So I called up and said, "Remember a couple weeks ago when you mentioned me playing with you? How about tomorrow night?" I'm not sure who suggested "Tom Joad"—I think I might have.

On that phone call, we weren't sure whether we'd do it acoustic or electric. So, of course, I was up all night preparing whatever incarnation might come up. But I was mortified when I arrived at soundcheck to find that they had changed the key of the song to one that was very much pushing my upper register, to put it politely.

I was there by myself. My guitar tech wasn't there. My wife was flying in from New York for the show. So I was literally alone in the cafeteria, where I could hear them rehearsing the song in a key that I could not sing or play in.

So I walked on stage, and both Bruce and Steven were gracious in terms of coaching me through some of the notes, and finally to his credit—they don't call him the Boss for nothing—he said, "We're going to do it in this key, and it's going to be fine." And sure enough, it was fine.

Well, not every guest who comes onstage with the E Street Band comes prepared. That obviously wasn't the case with you. I think part of the thrill of it for a

Melbourne, Australia
March 27, 2013





Los Angeles, CA
April 26, 2012

lot of people was not only seeing these two guys come together from semi-different worlds, but also seeing somebody who is so good, and so ready. How much work did you do on the solo in particular beforehand?

The solo was pretty improvised. I mean, I knew at some point I was going to do the scratchy-scratch thing, but it was largely improvised. It's a real good chord progression to solo over.

I've played one or two guitar solos in my life. I'm very rarely nervous onstage, and I was very nervous going into that because I'm such a big fan. But when it comes to standing onstage in an arena and playing a guitar solo, I've done that a few times before. So, I just thought, "I'm just going to be me," and I appreciate the fact that Bruce gave me a lot of bars to do it in [laughs].

It's funny, too, because I think you genuinely inspired Nils Lofgren—who, you know, plays a pretty mean guitar himself. I had the chance to interview him later, and I mentioned that he seemed to pull some more tricks out of his bag after that. He said something like, "Yeah I felt like, y'know, 'Okay, you little whippersnapper. You can do that. Look what I can do.'"

It is funny because I went to the second show in Anaheim as well, and I did notice that there was an energy among the guitar

players the second night. They took their game up a notch.

What do you think of Bruce as a guitarist?

I think he's a great guitar player. It's one of the first things I realized when I got *Darkness on the Edge of Town*—that's a great guitar soloing record. It's great. It's not *serviceable*, it's *great* guitar playing on that record. A lot of what, in my view, goes into being a great guitar player is not just the ability to play solos; there are plenty of guitar players who can wank around on the guitar but can't play rhythm or use the guitar to effectively convey an emotion or thought. And Bruce does that in spades. He's definitely well-rounded as a guitar player: he's a very good lead guitar player, but he has the other elements as well.

He's a great acoustic guitar player, too, which I think maybe doesn't get the kind of attention as some of his other stand-out qualities—as a band leader, and as a songwriter—but he's a great acoustic guitar player.

That was a big part of the fun of the *Tom Joad* tour, really getting to see the skill, and the sheer variety... like when he broke out that new version of "The Promised Land"—and he did this on the *Devils & Dust* tour, too—where the guitar becomes more of a percussion instrument.

Yeah, yeah, I remember that from the *Devils & Dust* tour. And that's—as I said before, one of the things that was very inspiring to me in my *Nightwatchman* work was the dynamic range that those shows had. He wasn't just standing up there playing 20 songs in a row. The dynamic range was very impressive.

Speaking of which, I want to talk about the *Nightwatchman* stuff, and it seems to me that the dynamic range of those records has really widened as they've gone along. The first one was much more guitar-and-harmonica, and this latest one, obviously, is all over the map.

Yep, yep.

There were a lot of comparisons drawn to Springsteen in *Nebraska* mode, in terms of what you'd been doing as *The Nightwatchman*; I also read that one of your real inspirations for that was Billy Bragg.

Absolutely.

With *Worldwide Rebel Songs*, though, it seems like you've really let yourself take the music all different sorts of places, while still scratching the political itch.

That's correct. This record is part Johnny Cash, part Che Guevara, and part Marshall stack. That was the *modus operandi*. This

was the 14th studio record of my career, and I figured if I'm not comfortable now with all elements of my artistic personality, I'm never going to be. With the first Nightwatchman record, it was very important to me to have it be a stark contrast to the guitar heroism of Rage and Audioslave. I wanted to make a very different artistic statement with that.

What changed for you since then?

I admit, it was playing "The Ghost of Tom Joad" with Bruce—that was the first time I ever sang with an electric guitar in my hands. And it made me think that I could do the Nightwatchman, maintain the integrity of the Nightwatchman material, while still being an electric guitar player. So that sort of opened the doors to a diversity of arrangements in this material.

The jumping-off point for the record was the title track, *Worldwide Rebel Songs*. The inspiration for that was about a year-and-a-half ago, some guitar workers from Seoul, Korea tried to unionize. They were all fired from their jobs. They closed down the plant, and the plant moved to China. They came to the United States looking for assistance and financial help. So I offered to play a benefit concert for them to help with their strike fund, and to help with the desperate situation that they and their families were in.

The day before the concert, the earthquake in Haiti happened. So, these Korean guitar workers, who were completely down and out and in desperate need of funds, voted to donate 100 percent of the proceeds from their benefit concert to the Haiti relief effort.

And I was so moved by that act of international solidarity that I wrote the song "Worldwide Rebel Song," performed it that night, and it was a jumping off point for this record. The idea in that song, and in the live Nightwatchman performances, is to try to create a little bit of the world that I'd like to see. And their selfless act was certainly indicative of that.

Something that Bruce has contended with more in recent years is some blowback for being political. Whether that's "American Skin (41 Shots)," or the Vote for Change tour, campaigning for Obama, a number of things. I imagine that's not a problem you've had, considering the overt part politics have played in your music, but I don't know.

I've never been bashful or apologetic about my take on domestic and world affairs, with Rage Against the Machine and the Nightwatchman, or in my personal life.

I didn't choose to be a guitar player. That chose me. And so, now that I'm blessed or cursed with being a guitar player, I think that one of my responsibilities is to tell the truth as I see it through my vocation. And I would feel the same if I were a carpenter, it'd be through the carpenters' union.

If I were a teacher, it'd be through teaching. And so, it's a given.

I don't know if you're familiar with—I did the *Union Town* EP recently, I played in Wisconsin during the union struggle there, when there were 100,000 people in the streets of Madison. I kind of put everything on hold. I was in the midst of having my second son, and in the midst of finishing this record, and I just stopped everything—postponing the birth of my son [laughs]—and made that *Union Town* record. One-hundred percent of the proceeds for that go towards the union struggles across the U.S. That's what I'm in it for. I'm not in it for fame or fortune. I'm in it to do my best to stand in the place where I work as a guitar player and as a songwriter to fight for social justice.



PLAYING "THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD" WITH BRUCE — THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER SANG WITH AN ELECTRIC GUITAR IN MY HANDS.

Right, which I think is so admirable. And to draw another comparison there, I think it's part of what a lot of people have come to love about Springsteen as well, is that he may take shit in the newspapers or from people saying, "Shut up and sing," but he still stands in that place too.

That's right. And in some ways I think it's harder for him, because his audience is broader. I don't know that there are a lot of John Birch Society members that are fans of Rage Against the Machine [laughs]. There may or may not be Springsteen fans of that ilk, but his audience cuts across the entire political spectrum. So of course people are going to have their feathers ruffled.

Music *should* be dangerous. Music *should* piss some people off. If you're making music that's so bland and middle of the road that *everybody*... you know, that no

one finds anything offensive in it, then it doesn't sound like very interesting music to me.

Thinking about *Worldwide Rebel Songs* and *Wrecking Ball* as contemporaries, I'm interested: do you and Bruce compare notes about this stuff in any way? Did you guys talk about Occupy Wall Street, do you talk about the songs you're working on?

The day that I worked on *Wrecking Ball* in New Jersey was the day after I had performed on Occupy Wall Street.

Oh, wow.

Yeah, it was the next day. And so we did have a conversation about that. It was still sort of percolating in the news, it wasn't the big sort of worldwide phenomenon that came maybe about a month later.

I'm sure you know that the songs from *Wrecking Ball* were written prior to the Occupy movement, but they certainly speak to the destruction of so many millions of lives caused by the corporate malfeasance that's torpedoed the global economy, that was in effect before the Occupy movement reared its head and gave it a voice. Bruce gives it a voice on this record, but it was also given a voice in the parks and street corners and City Hall steps around the world.

And yeah, I think it's a good point and important to remember that Bruce was paying a great deal of attention and writing about the state of things

before Occupy was a movement. I don't know if you read his [press conference] from Paris, but it was good to see him address Occupy there, couching it as, "Finally, we've been seeing this stuff, I've been writing about this stuff, and then to see voices in the street come together and do something..."

So there are obviously similarities in the topics you're interested in and some of the things you're saying on your record and that Bruce is saying on *Wrecking Ball*... Where do you think you differ?

Part of what has been a thread that runs through Bruce's music that he articulated in the press for this record is that his music judges the difference between America's promise and America's reality. I'm paraphrasing that, but that's something I've seen. Right?

Right.

I happen to think that economic inequality and racism and imperial ambition are every bit as interwoven in the American DNA as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Like, America brought the world baseball, apple pie, lynching, and napalm. It's all one stew, you know?

So if there's some way where we differ, it's that I have less of the sort of golden vision or utopian vision of what the real America is that we're working towards. My take is that there are *competing* visions of what the world should be like. One thing our music has in common, we both lend a voice to people on the good side of that struggle.

One place where I think there's a pretty stark contrast in the two records is where you wind up at the end. On "We Are Alive," the souls are rising and we're fighting shoulder-to-shoulder; on your record, it's "Another broken spirit in a broken-hearted town" and "We are all that we feared."

Yeah, true [laughs]... Mine ends on a... though the bonus track on my record is "Union Town"—after the record ends thematically, we sort of throw in a marching anthem for the working class. But you're right, and I think it's interesting. And the second-to-the-last song on Bruce's record is "Land of Hope and Dreams," which is... my take on it is, it's a very moving song about passing, in a way, and sort of the hope of an afterlife. But it's about death. And my second-to-last song is "Worldwide Rebel Song," is about the best that is in people. So it's interesting, there are some parallels there.

I'd like to talk about process, too, when you're in the studio with Bruce. You've probably heard the story about Bruce essentially dictating the "Jungleland" solo to Clarence—parts that sound spontaneous were often very deliberately constructed. What sort of direction did he give you for your parts? Did you have free rein?

Well, I agree with some of my anarchist friends when I say that he's the only boss worth listening to [laughs]. The first day that I worked on stuff, Bruce was not around—it was in Los Angeles, it was just the engineer, and I laid down solos on a number of tracks, including "Jack of All Trades."

The initial solo that I put down for "Jack of All Trades," I used as a starting point the line, "If I had me a gun, I'd shoot the bastards on sight." So the first solo I put down was a firing squad solo [laughs]. It was sort of a barn-burning thing. And then when I went to New Jersey, Bruce asked for something more... eloquent. So I did my best.

That song in particular seems like a perfect one for you. Again, looking at the two

records, you know, we hosted a download of "It Begins Tonight" [from *Worldwide Rebel Songs*] before *Wrecking Ball* came out, and in a way that was a nice little preview of what was to come. There are real similarities between that, like with the line "I followed the rules, what did that bring," which makes me think of "Jack of All Trades."

Exactly.

How complete were Springsteen songs when you came to them? Were they pretty much ready to go and you were laying something on top?

There might have been some lyrics that weren't finished for the last song on the record, for "We Are Alive." But other than that, the songs were complete. It sounded awesome, frankly; I heard them before they were mixed, and the record just sounded awesome—the pre-mix to the tracks sounded pretty phenomenal coming out of the speakers.

When I listened to "Death to My Hometown" and "Shackled and Drawn," my first impression was that it felt like it was Civil War-era funk. It was like the Seeger Sessions Band instruments with this big, funky bottom-end to it—perfectly integrated.

Which is what I love about the record, how well it's all fused together.

Yeah, it doesn't feel like hip-hop beats sewn on to Pete Seeger songs. It's perfect-

one who was living at Occupy performed after me. Occupy wasn't waiting around for musical saviors to come and grace them with their presence [laughs]—it had a very, very vibrant, original music scene, which I thought was very cool and was a reflection of the bottom-up democratic nature of the movement.

So, I agree with you, there's not a lot of Katy Perry and Rhianna tunes that are speaking to the desperate economic times... but that's okay.

Bruce has talked a lot about Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger as having a tremendous impact on him; I would assume they did on you, too, though I don't really know that for sure.

Sort of retroactively they did. I mean, I didn't discover folk music until the mid-'90s. I was very much a fan of heavy music growing up, hard rock music and then into punk rock and then rap music. I think it was the first two Dylan records I discovered that made me realize that music—that three chords and the truth and the right lyrical couplet could be just as heavy as anything played with Marshall stacks.

And then that led me to... well, I had *Nebraska* by that time, but then I sort of started reading about the influences on the *Nebraska* record and on the early Dylan stuff, and that's when I discovered Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Phil Ochs. and Joe Hill and people like that. It definitely planted the seed.

AS I'VE SAID BEFORE, HE'S THE ONLY FRIEND I HAVE WHO I SUBSCRIBE TO A MAGAZINE ABOUT

ly integrated, which is cool. And "angry party jam" [laughs]—that's quite a trick to pull off. It has all of the rousing, stadium-ready Bruce Springsteen rock with a capital "R...A...W...K..." but the sentiments that are woven through the music and the lyrics really speak to the desperation of these times. That's quite a feat.

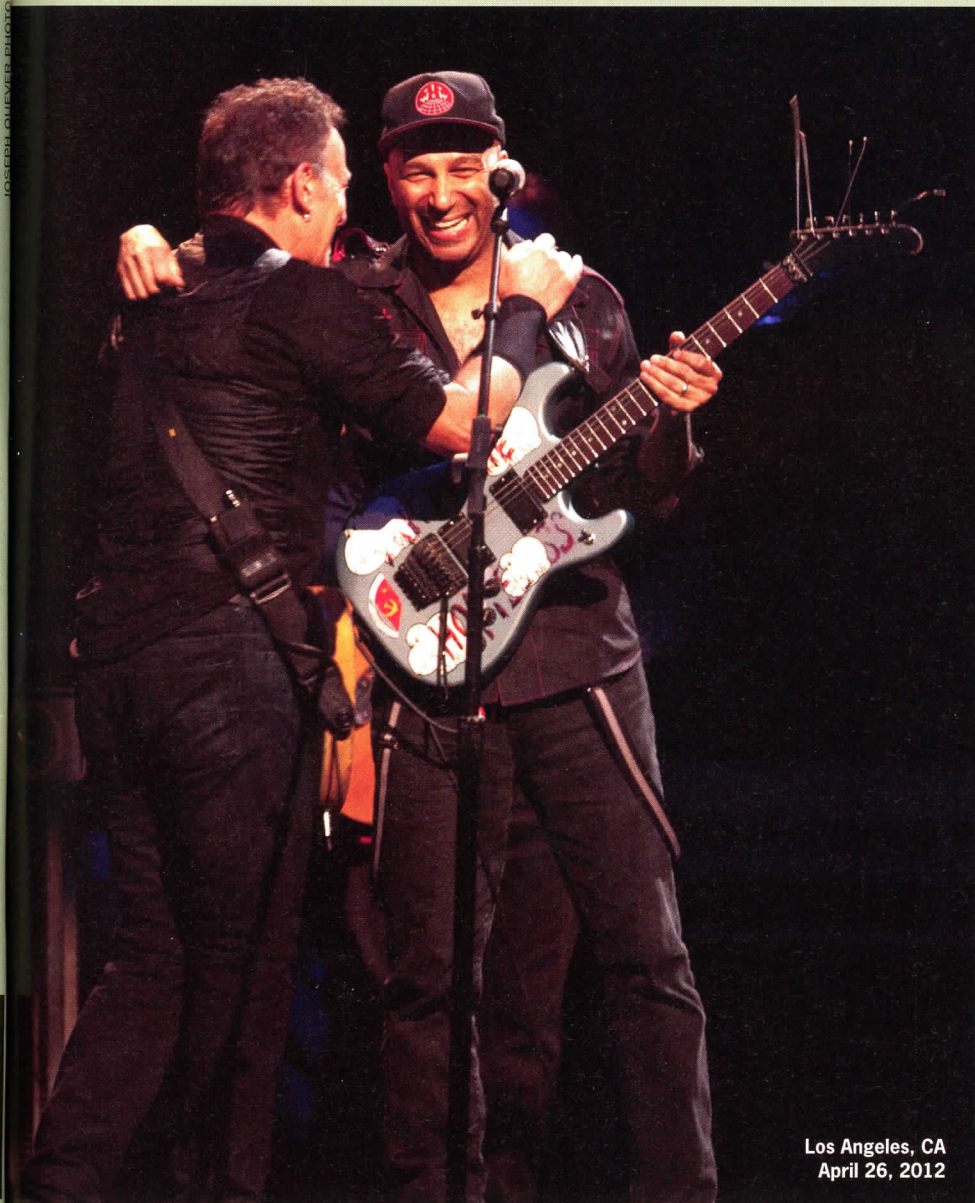
What's your take at this point—I don't know if this is a boring question or an interesting question—on the state of protest music right now? Not too many people are doing it...

Well, I would disagree with that thesis. I would say that there may not be a lot of people doing it who are at the top of the charts, Bruce Springsteen notwithstanding, but I performed at over a dozen of the Occupy encampments, and the music scenes at the Occupy movement were so vibrant. For example, the day I performed at Occupy Wall Street, two people who were living at Occupy performed before me, and

And then, again, *The Ghost of Tom Joad* record was so instrumental, and the tour especially. Just one man with an acoustic guitar, and it was as heavy as Metallica in a stadium. That really left me breathless and made me think.

I had an experience in the immediate aftermath of that, too. I was MC of this talent show at this teen homeless shelter in Hollywood. This one guy got up there, he was like 19 years old with a beat-up acoustic guitar. He didn't have much of a voice, but he meant every word he was saying in a way that was so inspiring, and I thought, "You know what? I could play a couple of chords, and I have some ideas in my head..." Up until that point I had just been concentrating on writing riffs, solos, things like that, but I went home and around the fireplace I started writing my first couple Nightwatchman songs.

I wanted to ask you about Clarence Clemons; if you had much interaction



Los Angeles, CA
April 26, 2012

with him over the years, or if you had any thoughts about Clarence.

Well, my first thought is that I'm still sad. Sad on one hand, and grateful on the other hand—that he was in the world. And provided so many awesome moments, both on record and live, and is such a crucial and thrilling part of some of my favorite music.

What a larger than life figure. You know, I'd get to go backstage at Bruce shows, and he was always so sweet to me, and we got to hang out backstage at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 25th Anniversary show. He was so funny. Clarence Clemons, he's just sitting there—he's sitting there looking like the king of a country of badasses. You know? Like a country you really want to be able to get a visa to but it's going to be really hard [laughs]. And I'm like, "Clarence, you are a *bad man*." I had just played, and he said, "Son, you are bad."

If Clarence Clemons—even if he's joking—says that once, I'm good. You know? I'm good.

We also occasionally joked about the fact that sometimes it seemed like we were the only two black dudes at a Bruce Springsteen concert.

Well, right. It's been interesting in the wake of his death to see how much race has been talked about. Some people think that too much has been made of it, that it wasn't a big deal that Clarence was black; and others are saying it's a huge deal. It's the elephant in the room.

One of the great parts of the E Street Band is that race is kind of a non-issue. Like, I'm trying to think of other acts that had commercial success in the '80s.... things changed in the '90s, but acts in the '70s and '80s that were kind of multiracial. I don't know. The Doobie Brothers... off the top of my head it's hard to try to name many.

No, it's true, not many. And Bruce, his band has always been like that. The '92-'93 band, whatever the case, whether con-

scious or not, he has made a point of it, right?

That's right. It was a very important and unspoken part of the entire history. What was woven into the fabric of the E Street Band was this equality and justice—this equality, justice and brotherhood—that stood in stark contrast to the world around it.

It makes me think of what you said about the Nightwatchman, creating the kind of world that you'd like to see.

Exactly.

And that's a lot of what's going on on that stage: it may not be the world we live in, but it's a world we'd like to live in. Bruce said something similar in his eulogy.

Yeah, yeah.

I was talking to—do you know Mark Anthony Thompson, Chocolate Genius?

Yes, I met him on [the Seeger Sessions] tour.

I got to interview him during that tour, and we were talking about race, and one thing he said—it's sort of a step removed from what you and Clarence joked about—he said, "It is a little weird that the only black people I see at these shows besides myself are the ones who come and clean up when the show is done."

You know, growing up, I literally integrated the town of Libertyville, Illinois.

Is that right?

Yeah. I was the first person. The real estate agent had to go out and ask permission from the other people in the apartment complex where we were trying to rent if it was okay that we lived there. It was crazy. So I'm going to heavy metal shows as a kid, and I was like the only black guy there. And at Bruce Springsteen shows... it's very interesting to be in that audience.

One of the things that I—this may be sort of a tangent, but there's an existential darkness and depth that is at the core of a lot of Bruce Springsteen's music. It's something that I sometimes wonder how much of that big audience gets it. You know?

I never like to think in elitist terms. One, I don't think it matters. I think people should enjoy a rock concert, and that's great. Plenty of fans of Rage Against the Machine like to bang their heads, and like the solos, and frankly, like the fact that Zack [de la Rocha, vocalist] is angry and could care less about what he's angry about. So, I get it. Casting the nets wide is fine [laughs]. But sometimes I just wonder... sometimes I think, like, I'm not just the only black guy, I'm one of the few who gets *what's going on*.

Songs like "Paradise," or songs like "Youngstown..." What's the one I was listening to the other day that has sort of a trick ending? The two brothers who come

Melbourne, Australia
March 27, 2013



up from Mexico to work in the meth lab... "Sinaloa Cowboys." At the end of that song, it's unstated, but he buries his brother in the hole where they kept the money. That's heavy. That is a metaphor for more than just a meth lab thing gone wrong.

I think that's some of the best writing that Bruce does is by leaving things out. And another example is in the song "The Hitter," the thing that's left out of that—which it took me probably 20 listenings to realize: she doesn't let him in.

That night he's not back on the couch. He's back in the fighting ring. It's not stated, but I'm like... that's heavy.

The way that you connected with the *Darkness on the Edge of Town* album, thinking about that along with what you just told me about growing up in

Libertyville... in a lot of ways, Bruce was an outsider growing up. A real outsider. I think that's probably reflected best on *Darkness*. Is that something you were connecting with?

Yeah, definitely. Certainly. The part of those songs that I connected with *least* was the *hopeful* part—you know, in the anthems, like "Badlands." For me, the struggle against the tar pit-like pull of that desperation is what fuels everything I do. The hopefulness that is in "The Promised Land" and some of those songs I appreciate more sort of artistically. The part that I really appreciate emotionally is like in "Racing in the Street," where they're on that drive at the end. Or "Factory." Where it's not going to work out.

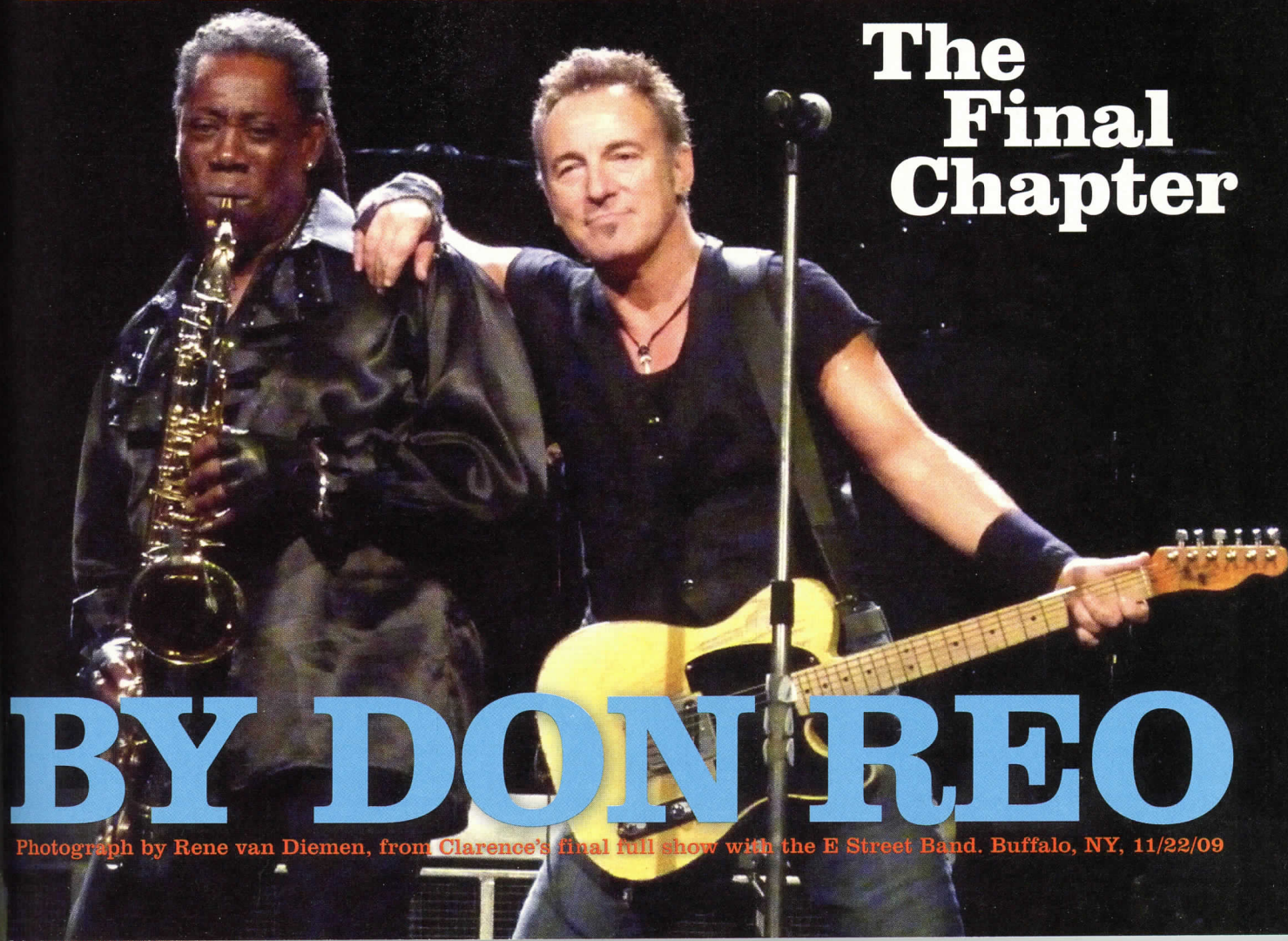
As I've continued doing more of the Nightwatchman stuff, the reason why it

really appeals to me to focus on this in my artistic life is—I started playing under the name The Nightwatchman because I started playing open mic nights. I was doing arena tours with Audioslave, and on nights off, I'd go to some coffee house or country and western bar and play my songs to begin honing my craft. And I would just sign up as The Nightwatchman. Because if I'd signed up as Tom Morello, people would want me to play "Bulls on Parade." So, it was literally a moniker to hide behind.

But as I started writing, and the material kind of grew into the name, one of the things I continue to explore in these songs is: I'm not sure which is the mask anymore. You know? Is it the sort of jovial person with you on the phone right now? Or is it the character on the fifth horse of the apocalypse? 🐎

BIG MAIN

**The
Final
Chapter**



BY DON REO

Photograph by Rene van Diemen, from Clarence's final full show with the E Street Band. Buffalo, NY, 11/22/09

Don

If you were walking through a small strip mall in West Palm Beach in the early evening of June 19, 2011, you might have heard music drifting out from the open door of a tiny cigar bar. If you were having dinner on the patio of the Italian restaurant next door it's possible you could have heard the sounds of a piano, a saxophone, and a man singing float over the boats in the harbor out back. What you couldn't tell was that the cigar bar was no longer a cigar bar. It was a church.

Almost a month earlier, on the 23rd of May, I received the following e-mail from Clarence:

"I have had some of the weirdest shit happen in the last few days. For one I've lost all the feeling in my left fingers which makes it very difficult to play the horn. The rest I'll tell U when I see you."

We saw each other later that week when we met for dinner at an expensive hotel restaurant in Beverly Hills along with his wife Victoria and her mother. It was to be the last time I spoke to him in person.

"This is fucked up," he said. "I woke up last week and my left hand was swollen like a balloon. Freaked me out. I went to the hospital and they gave me some shit for the swelling, but I still can't feel anything in my left thumb and forefinger."

"And you can't play at all?" I asked. Earlier he had told me about some pending recording dates and a possible tour. He really wanted to do it one more time. He lived for the road.

"Not really," he said. "I can fake it, but I can't really play. I don't know what I'm going to do."

I could feel his anxiety. What would he be without the horn? The two became one thing, like lovers, like rivers in the rain. It was hard to tell where his gold tipped fingers ended and the horn began. Theirs was a marriage of breath and brass. Not being able to play was unthinkable.

"What do your doctors say?"

"Might be a broken bone in my wrist or carpal tunnel syndrome or something else. I spoke to Bruce and I'm going to see his doctor here in LA tomorrow. I felt a lot better after I talked to him. That's the best thing to come out of this. I know that Bruce loves me."

We talked about a lot of things that night, including the *American Idol* finale and the video he'd just shot with Lady Gaga. He loved working with her and sang her praises. We talked about a possible fishing trip to the Keys and various ideas for a second book. He wanted to write about soul and what it meant to him and how he

felt it was disappearing from music and the culture in general. We talked politics and cars and music in the easy way we had both come to appreciate. But the bottom line of our friendship was that we could always make each other laugh.

"Jesus," I said, looking at the menu. "They've got a steak here that costs three hundred dollars."

"Three hundred dollars," said C. "For three hundred dollars we can buy an entire fucking cow."

After dinner we had nightcaps in the bar. But it was too loud and too crowded and the music was bad. Plus, it was getting late and we both had early morning appointments. We said goodbye in the lobby with a hug.

"I love you," I said.

"I love you too," he replied.

Then he added the coda we used to close most of our conversations. It was a phrase my old friend Bill Bixby employed as an admonition to enjoy the present. Clarence patted my back and as we broke the embrace he said, "Order the good wine."

C returned to Florida and had more medical people look at his hand. He tried chiropractic to no avail. A scan revealed a small broken bone in his wrist that could be putting pressure on the nerve and causing the numbness in his fingers. No one thought it might have been caused by a mini stroke.

He had outpatient surgery performed on Tuesday, June 7, and returned to Singer Island to recuperate.

I checked in on him several times that week via phone and text. and on Saturday June 11 I received the following message from him:

"Hey, all is well. The operation went well, I am out of pain but it will take some time to get back to normal where ever that is. I have not touched the horn in a while but I am getting there."

The message came at 1:40 in the afternoon, west coast time. At 1:47 I wrote back:

"Good. God bless."

That was the final communication I had with him.

The next afternoon I was at home in Los Angeles when I got a message from C's close friend and former assistant Lani Richmond. She told me that Clarence had suffered a stroke, and that he was in the hospital. His doctors had already performed one brain surgery and were about to begin another.

Victoria had awakened that morning to find herself alone in bed. She found him on the floor in the hall. He was conscious but his speech was slurred. He was able to identify her as his wife. She dialed 911 and then knocked on the door of their nearest neighbor, a doctor who, as luck would have it, was away on vacation. But the paramedics were there in minutes. Victoria called an influential friend who contacted the hospital. Top doctors were on call that day and did everything they could.

It seemed impossible that he wouldn't recover. He always recovered. He'd been through so many medical crises and had so much work done, I once called him the six-million-dollar man. He replied, "Six? I passed six in 1992!"

But obviously there was reason for serious concern, and the men, women and children in Clarence's life began to make their way to South Florida.

The next few days were an emotional demolition derby. At first the news seemed encouraging. There was some movement on his left side. He was able to communicate by squeezing hands. But the effects of a stroke of that magnitude continue on after the initial event. As the days passed, the reality of the situation began to seep into our minds, and we realized that full recovery was not going to happen. As Victoria said, "Clarence is fighting for his life." I could conjure up the image of an impaired Big Man, a victim of severe stroke confined to a wheelchair, but I couldn't hold it in focus. I would see it, and then it would disappear like smoke on the wind. I made travel plans.

Clarence's fifth wife, the former Victoria Sherbakova had been born and raised in Russia. She took a job as a restaurant hostess in Marin County California to be near her twin sister Julia. Clarence walked in one night, thanked her for bringing beauty into his life and began sending her roses every day until she agreed to go out with him. They were married in Sausalito on 8/8/08 at 8 o'clock in the evening. It was a beautiful wedding. She would spend the most of the next two-and-a-half years watching C from the side of a stage or a hospital bed. I have never seen Clarence as happy as he was during his time with Victoria. It seemed he had at long last found his true love. But now, with a terrifying quickness, he had been taken away.

On Friday, as I was headed for LAX for a morning flight to Florida, my phone rang. It was Lani. "Hurry," she said.

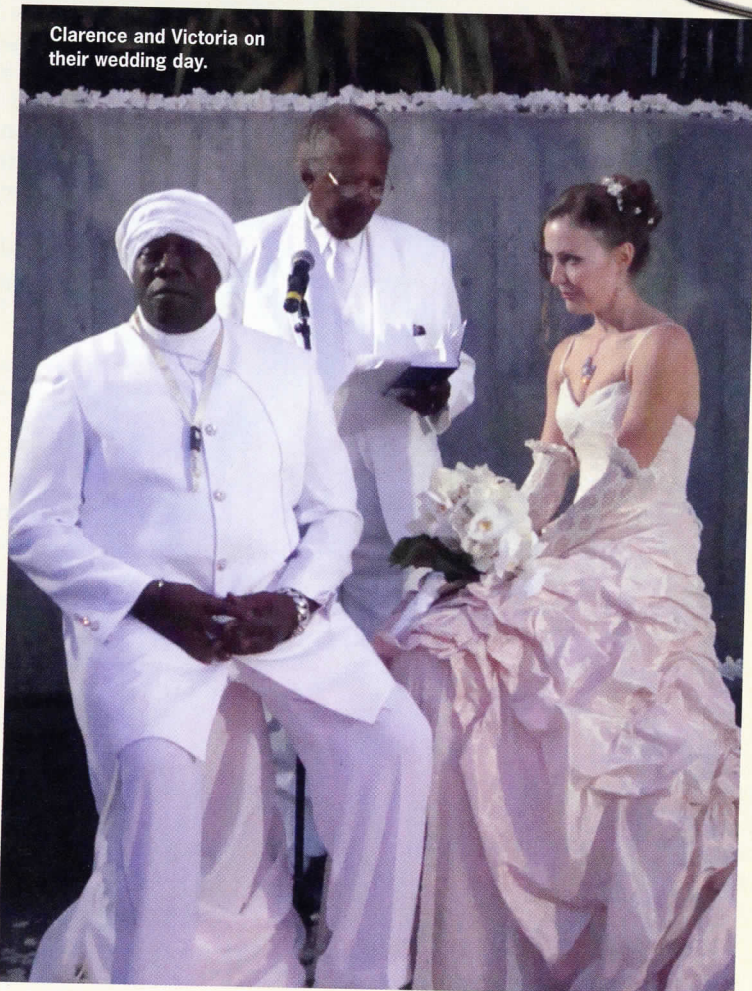
She went on to say that C's latest scan showed no brain activity. Essentially he was being kept alive by machines. I found this difficult to process. I still believed he could somehow survive. That last vestige of hope was difficult to abandon.

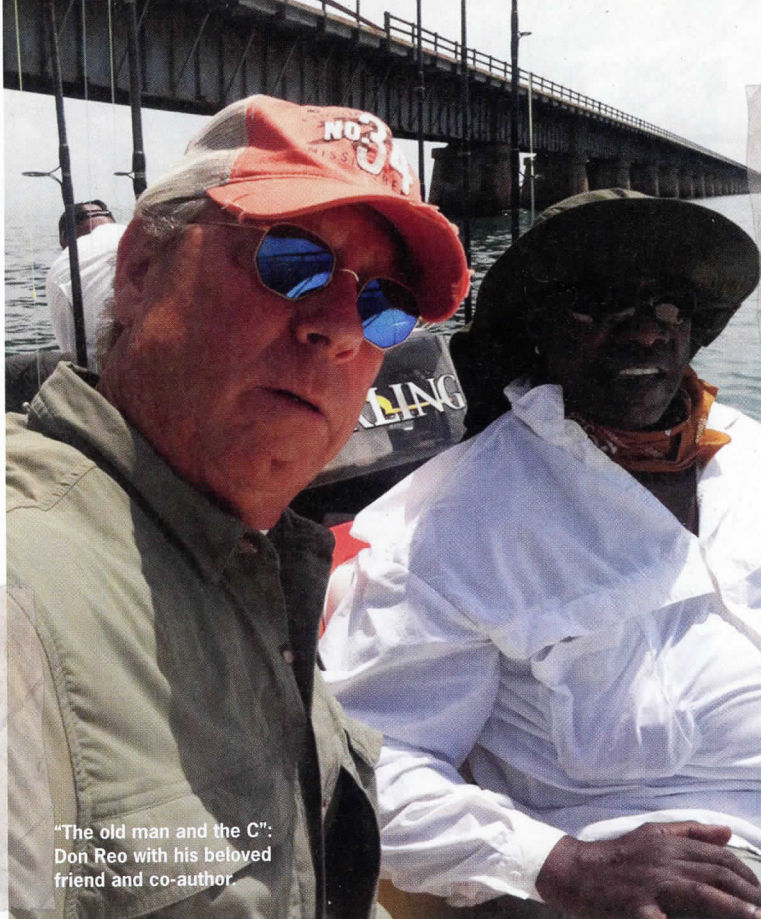
When I arrived at St. Mary's Hospital that evening I was taken to see Clarence who was in a room at the edge of the world. My dear friend was lying on a bed surrounded by monitors and machines. His eyes were closed and he looked like he was asleep. I thought he might turn his head and wink at any moment. I touched his hand and listened to him breathe every 16 seconds. I watched his chest rise and fall and then I cried.

Over the next 24 hours all of us gathered there, family and friends tried to help each other get through this horrible experience. I witnessed many acts of compassion

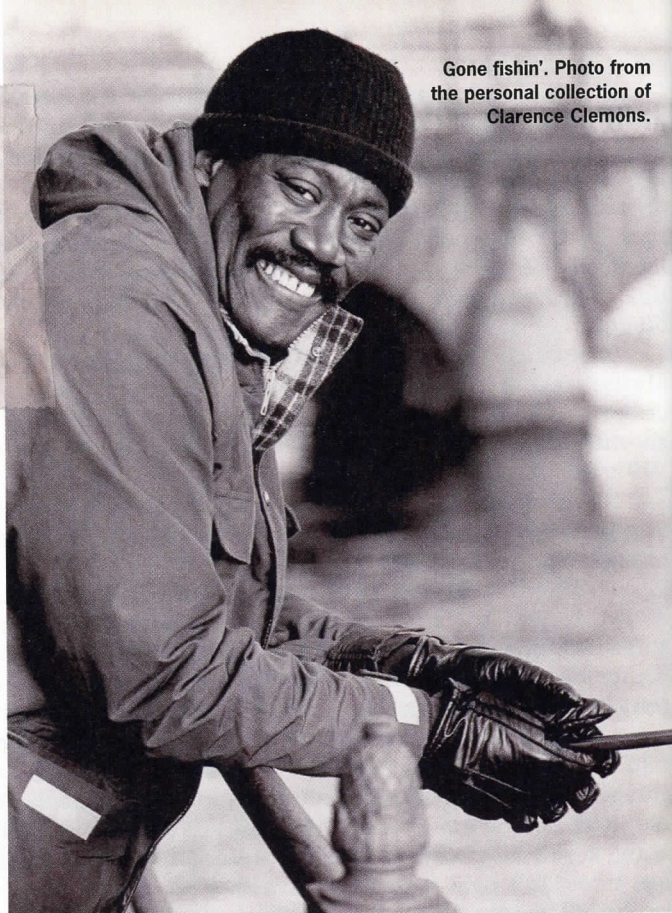


Clarence and Victoria on their wedding day.





"The old man and the C":
Don Reo with his beloved
friend and co-author.



Gone fishin'. Photo from
the personal collection of
Clarence Clemons.

and kindness, things I will never forget. Clarence's youngest son Jarod was having a particularly difficult time. Bruce took him out to the hospital garden and they came back with three sandstones. Bruce told Jarod to write a message to Clarence on one rock and have everyone present sign the second one. Bruce wrote his own message on the remaining rock. "Tomorrow," he said, "we'll go down to the shore. It's a very healing place. We'll walk into the ocean and throw the rocks out into the deep water."

In the late afternoon of the 18th, the surgeon who had tried to save Clarence prepared us for what was going to happen. He was gentle and kind and solicitous and I hated every word he spoke.

By six o'clock Saturday evening, everyone who was going to be there to say goodbye had arrived and had done so.

A little while later, Clarence died peacefully surrounded by love and music.

After he passed we sat together in the waiting room one last time. Clarence's nephew Jake sang "This Little Light of Mine," and we all sang "The Rivers of Babylon." We told stories and listened to Clarence's voice on the final memos he had recorded. I'm happy to say the last one was a filthy, dirty joke. He made us laugh in our time of greatest sorrow.

Eventually we left the hospital together. As we were walking out the building for the final time, George Travis, road manager for the band, said "Look at this. Everybody's walking down some corridor into the night. Just like after every single show."

A few hours later Lani, Gayle Morrison and I drank Patrón Margaritas and toasted Clarence. We toasted him more than once. The day had been the most real and the most surreal any of us had ever experienced, and we were glad to see it end.

I woke up Sunday morning to a world that didn't have Clarence Clemons in it, and it was not as good. It seemed impossible. It was as if someone had told me that Mount Rushmore had died. Later that day a small group of family and friends met at the ocean for an impromptu purification ceremony. We went into the salty water and celebrated the living spirit of Clarence.

The rocks were thrown into the sea, and there was a feeling of renewal and togetherness and sorrow and, once again, hope. We stood on the beach near sundown, men and women brought together by love for Clarence, and looked to each other for solace. I found some there.

A few days later the official funeral took place at The Royal Poinciana Chapel in Palm Beach, and it was sad and lovely. Members of Clarence's family were joined by his closest friends and companions. There were beautiful words spoken and songs sung and tears shed as we all said goodbye to C. He was my best friend, and I will miss him every day that I'm alive.

There is an important fact to consider when talking about the life and times of Clarence Clemons, and it is this: Clarence Clemons was not normal. Even before fame he was physically different from most people and became more so over the years. His long hair and his brilliant teeth and his painted nails were not normal. He got high almost every day of his adult life and functioned that way. He was adored for who he was but also for *what* he was. He was a superhero. A larger-than-life action figure who would also steal your girlfriend's heart. He was not normal. He slept with thousands of women and married many times. He loved booze and Cuban cigars and Jesus. A long series of spectacular women took care of him for most of his life. Singularly, or in groups, they met his every need and desire. They cuddled and cajoled and

administered to him on a level previously reserved for Kings and Gods.

He was not normal. Clarence could put on a spangled suit, a full length cape, a fedora, gloves and sunglasses, walk into the finest restaurant in the world without a reservation and be given the best table in the house. *You* try that and see what happens. He was unique, he was talented, he was funny and smart, but he was not normal. In fact he was like a living, breathing carnival. There were bright lights and music and thrills galore. There were screams of delight and tears and games of chance. Some of the rides were dark. A few were very dark. There were lots of children and hustlers and food and scantily clad women. There were assorted freaks and geeks and junkies and pickpockets and preachers. But everything turned toward the fantastic when the sun went down and the calliope started to play. Sometimes you stayed up past your usual bedtime because the night was full of possibilities and you had the feeling that anything could happen. One night in Dublin we got hold of some Irish moonshine and we sang old songs until the sun came up. It might have been the best night of my life.

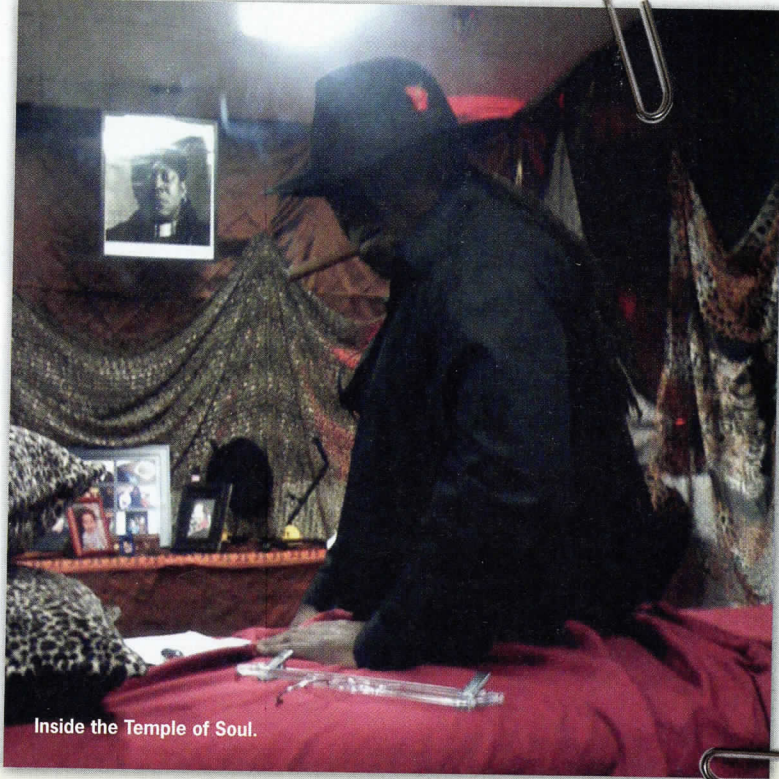
But on the evening of June 19, I found myself in that small club with the rest of C's extended family. The night was an unusual combination of joy and grief. It was as if the piano bar aboard the Flying Dutchman had been commandeered by pirates for an impromptu musical memorial service. Bruce sat at the keyboard and sang "Lean On Me" with Clarence's niece Christina Westfall. C's brother Bill, who also plays the saxophone, sat in a big leather chair and joined in on "Spirit in the Night." Then Bruce sang two songs that can best be called hymns. He and Jake played a heartbreaking rendition of "Drive All Night." When Bruce sang "Don't cry now," nobody in the room could follow directions. Jake's sax seemed to channel Clarence and was both beautiful and achingly sad.

Then came a deeply moving version of "Lift Me Up" dedicated to Clarence. It was a prayer sung in falsetto. A transcendent performance, heartfelt and sweet, mournful and mystic.

Clarence would've loved that night. There were drinks and cigars and music and pizza and pretty girls and family and good friends. The summertime Florida night air felt like velvet. It made you want to get behind the wheel and roll down the windows and turn the radio up loud and drive down some highway toward the sea. It felt like a sin to enjoy it without him. But it also felt like a sacrament.

And so the Big Man is gone. I am left to go on without him until the day I keep my own appointment in Samarra. Of course his music continues, I'm listening to his horn as I write this. But now it's just echoes. I'll never hear his voice on the phone again telling me the joke he just heard. We'll never sit quietly on a boat in the Florida sunshine fishing and drinking beer. And, to paraphrase J.D. Salinger, there is no one whom I would care to send out to look for horses in his stead.

After all is said and done I am left with this final observation: When Clarence Clemons walked into a room, he changed it. The air took on a different quality like it does before a thunderstorm. You may not have known what it was, but your senses told you that something large and powerful was nearby. The air around him crackled like heat lightning, and sparks flew on E Street. 🍂



Inside the Temple of Soul.



A moment of gratitude and peace.
Photograph taken by
Victoria Clemons.

LITTLE STEVEN'S UNDERGROUND GARAGE

"For Clarence" Shooting Script

Segment 1

Opening Song: "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" live at the Tower Theatre
12/31/1975 - Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band

Music Bed: "Forgiveness" - Clarence Clemons from A Night With Mr. C

STEVEN: Welcome to a special edition of the Underground Garage. A tribute to the memory of my friend Clarence Clemons. First of all, I want thank everyone who has sent such loving messages. Literally hundreds of e-mails I cannot answer, so I thank you here. Rock 'n' roll has lost an irreplaceable performer, the E Street Band has lost its second member and, personally, I have lost a lifelong friend and brother.

Rock 'n' roll historians will discuss in great detail, and lengthy discourse, the profound racial implication and effect of a white rock band in the early '70s having a black man with such a strong featured presence. As well as the unmistakable and dangerously unfashionable, more than just a nod but *marriage* to tradition by the inclusion of, to many, the embarrassingly and hopelessly anachronistic saxophone. It was a time of reaching for the future. Glam had started, and yet Bruce Springsteen decided to keep a firm grasp of the past as he looked ahead, commercial suicide for anyone less talented than he.

Band members have a special bond; a great band is more than just some people working together. It's like a highly specialized army unit or a winning sports team, a unique combination of elements that become stronger together than apart. We've become a part of

I would like to thank you, my fans, for all the love and support that you have shown me throughout my long career. As I start out on yet another musical journey, I hope that you will find as much fun and enjoyment as I am experiencing it.

CLARENCE CLEMONS
CLARENCE
ROAD TO
CLARENCE CLEMONS-JIMMY DILL
YOU'RE A FRIEND
NARRATOR MICHAEL WILSON
I'LL
PAUSE Y
STEVE CROPPER-EDDIE FLORES
LIGHTS ON
CLARENCE
PINK
BLUES

11 Things
Step Two
Fatha Jo
Road To

LITTLE STEVEN
UNDERGROUND GARAGE
MAXIMUM ROCK AND ROLL

peace maker

each other and experienced marvelous, miraculous moments in life that only we truly share. We will continue to make music and perform (let's face it, that's all we really know how to do), but it will be very different without him. Just as it's been different without Danny, our first lost comrade.

The quality of our lives is diminished every time we lose a great artist. It's a different world without Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Curtis Mayfield, Brian Jones, and the rest. But like all of them, Clarence leaves us his work, which will continue to inspire us and motivate us and future generations forever.

Rock 'n' roll is our religion, and we will continue to lose disciples as we go, but we pick up the fallen flag and keep moving forward, bringing forth the Good News that our heroes have helped create, their bodies lost, but their spirits and their good work everlasting. And for the E Street Band, the heart of us, Clarence and Danny, will always be there stage right.

So thank you, Clarence. I didn't get a chance to say goodbye, but I'll see you again soon enough. Thank you for blowing life-changing energy and hope into this miserable world with your big beautiful lungs; and thank you for sharing a piece of that big heart nightly with the world. It needs it. You and that magnificent saxophone, celebrating, confessing, seeking redemption, and providing salvation all at once; speaking wordlessly, but so eloquently, with that pure sound you made. The sound of life itself.

Music Bed: "Paradise By the C" - Clarence Clemons from Live in Asbury Park

STEVEN: We started our tribute to Clarence Clemons with "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," live from the Tower Theatre, 1975, New Years Eve, telling the all-important story of the relationship between Bruce and Clarence that would be so important. First set was "The Night," from *Born to Run*; "Jump Start My Heart," from Clarence's first solo record *Rescue*, written by Ellie Greenwich and Desmond Child, with Ralph Schuckett producing; "Say Goodbye to Hollywood," that was Ronnie Spector and the E Street Band from 1977 or so — a particularly important moment in the history of the E Street Band.



The Palladium, NYC, 1976.

JAMES SHIVE PHOTO

We had run out of money, and I went to another of my lifelong best friends that I just lost, Steve Popovich. I said, "Steve, we're in trouble, any ideas?" And he came back a day later and said, "Billy Joel has this terrific song, a tribute to Phil Spector and the Ronettes. Why don't you do it with the E Street Band, and Ronnie? I'll pay everybody double scale." Which was the equivalent of about four weeks of our salaries at that point, and that's what we did, and it helped keep the band together at that very critical moment. So thank you

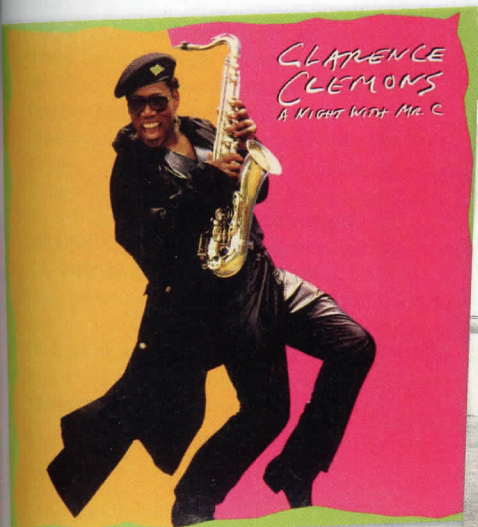
Steve Popovich for that and a million other things, including signing Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes. One of the great record men of all time.

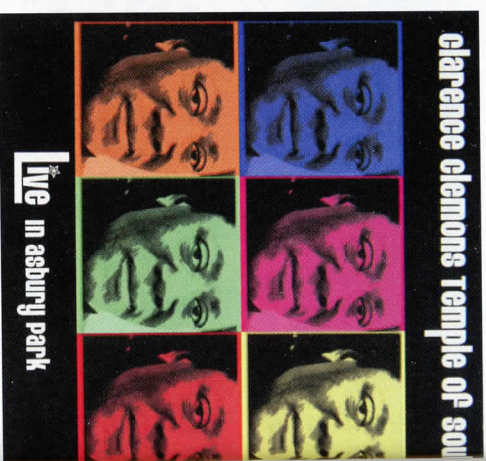
And we closed the set with "Out in the Street," from *The River*. We will go to the break with Clarence's first session. So here he is with Norman Seldin and the Joyful Noyze.

Segment 2

Music Bed: "Peter Gunn Theme" - Clarence Clemons from Porky's Revenge!

STEVEN: Clarence Nicholas Clemons, Jr., was born January 11th, 1942. Born in Norfolk County, Virginia, son of a fish market owner, oldest of three children, his grandfather was a southern Baptist preacher, so Clarence grew up with gospel music. His father bought him a saxophone at the age of nine; he'd go through the soprano and the baritone before ending up with the tenor after his uncle bought him a King Curtis album. Went to Maryland State College, and was almost a Cleveland Brown





football player, but he got in a serious car accident, and that was the beginning of his problem with his knees. At Maryland State he joined the Vibratones, playing James Brown covers in the early '60s; would work with emotionally disturbed children in Newark, New Jersey, in the mid-'60s.

At a certain point in the late '60s, or very, very early '70s, me and Bruce got it in our heads that the very cool saxophone tone that we would hear on virtually every one of our favorite records, before The Beatles changed everything — it was gone. How'd it go from being on virtually every single of the '50s, and half of the early-'60s records, to completely disappear? So we started searching for that tone, and Garry Tallent, our bass player, suggested a guy he had played with in a group called Little Melvin and the Invaders. And out we went to a completely surreal black nightclub, in the middle of the woods (which to this day I have no

idea where it was), and there was that sound. Clarence would leave Norman Selkin and the Joyful Noize and join the E Street Band in October of 1972. A lifelong relationship began, quite modestly since no one would hire us, but things turned out okay.

Music Bed: "Small Things" – Clarence Clemmons from Live in Asbury Park

STEVEN: We started that set with "Mary Lou," outtake from *The River*, would end up on *Tracks*. "The Fever," which features Clarence's classic doo-wop bass vocals he would employ from time to time when the circumstance required it; and on that record yet another lifelong friend I have lost in the last two weeks, Kevin Kavanagh, the original piano player with the Jukes. Been a very weird month. "Sherry Darling," of course from *The River*; and Clarence's biggest hit, "You're a Friend of Mine," duet with Jackson Browne, that from his *Heroes* collection, written by Jeffrey Cohen and Narada Michael Walden, and produced by Arthur Baker. It's the Big Man tonight, wall-to-wall, and we're gonna go to the break with the very last thing Clarence did: Lady Gaga, "On the Edge of Glory."

Segment 3 *Music Bed: "Slow Walk" – Sil Austin featuring Clarence Clemmons*

STEVEN: Clarence would make five solo records; play with Aretha Franklin, Twisted Sister, the Grateful Dead, would be in the very first version of Ringo Starr and His All-Star Band; work with Michael Walden and most recently Lady Gaga. Marry Scorese officially made him an actor in *New York, New York*, playing Bob De Niro's good friend and helping a bit with the saxophone lessons, I'm sure. He'd also be in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, and a bunch of TV things: *Diff'rent Strokes*, *Nash Bridges*, *The Simpsons*, and *The Wire*. He just recently published his autobiography, which he would write with friend Don Reo, called *Big Man: Real Life and Tall Tales*, half truth and half fiction (Big Man never did do things the easy way).

Music Bed: "Tights of the City" – Clarence Clemmons from Live in Asbury Park Vol. II

STEVEN: We started that set with "She's the One," from *Born to Run*; Clarence would play with Ian Hunter on "All The Good Ones are Taken," Max Norman co-producing with Ian; "Savin' Up," something Bruce wrote for Clarence, and they would produce it together; and "Freeway of Love," once again written by Jeff Cohen and Michael Walden, and produced by Michael and the amazing Aretha Franklin. We are celebrating the life and music of Clarence Clemmons. Let's go to the break with one of my favorite songs of all time, live from Cleveland, 2009.

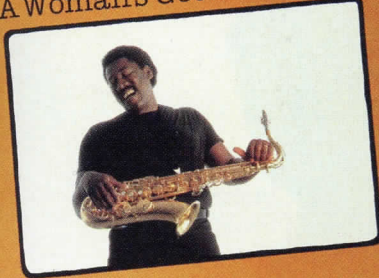
Segment 4 *Music Bed: "Rosalia" – Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band*

STEVEN: Bruce's decision to have a saxophone in the band, in 1972, at first glance, was absolute comm-



Clarence Clemons And The Red Bank Rockers

A Woman's Got The Power



cial suicide. Horns were no longer fashionable, no longer hip. I still remember when the radio consultants began, somewhere in the mid-'70s there, they sent a memo around saying "do not play anything with horns in it." Of course we had just put out Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes' first album, that was great timing.

So it was a very odd move, particularly with the fragmentation taking place in the early '70s, and most of the industry looking forward, and running as fast they could from the past. Any thing associated with tradition, including the Wild West mentality of the business. You couldn't really call it a business; it would become a business in the '70s, far more educated, far more sophisticated, far more civilized, and the one thing that didn't change was the racial lines just as rigidly drawn as they had been in the past (we'll talk more about that in the next segment). It's easy to take it for granted now, the acknowledging of tradition and integrating the past into one's work. It's really quite acceptable these days, but it wasn't then, and it took a particular vision, and one would have to call it tunnel vision, for Bruce to ignore everything that was going on, and be quite confident having a six-foot-six black man playing a saxophone was going to work for him; and the rest of the world would just have to catch up.

Music Bed: "Liberation Fire" – Clarence Clemons from Hero

STEVEN: We started that set with "Loose Ends," one of Bruce's best and one of the E Street Band's best, it would be released finally on *Tracks*; "Woman's Got the Power," back to *Rescue*, Clarence's first solo record — really his best and quite a fabulous album, the whole thing — Rocco Nottle writing that one, and Ralph Shuckett producing; Clarence playing the riff on "Daddy's Come Home," the Gary U.S. Bonds record Bruce and I did, the first one; and of course "Born to Run," still amazingly powerful, isn't it? He's The Big Kahuna, one of a kind. We're celebrating Clarence Clemons. Let's go to the break, and hear a bit of Clarence's fabulous solo on Darlene Love's "All Alone on Christmas."



Big Man and Little Steven together at the May 8, 2010 Clarence Clemons Classic to Benefit Home Safe.

Segment 5

Music Bed: "Road to Paradise" – Clarence Clemons from Live in Asbury Park Vol. II

STEVEN: There were a few other integrated bands in the '60s and early '70s, most notably the Paul Butterfield Blues Band comes to mind, but there weren't many, and when the E Street Band started, they were literally half black, three and three. When the final personnel changes took place, only Clarence would remain, but he would move from being a notable sideman to the upfront position when he was put on the cover of *Born to Run*.

What kind of an image was this in 1975? Skinny white kid in a black leather jacket leaning on a huge black saxophone player; it didn't make any sense, really. Was a statement being made? Absolutely, but of course nobody wanted to think about what that statement meant. After all, we had just become a business, let's not do anything politically to screw that up.

But what we forgot looking back now is 1972 we were eight years from the Civil Rights Act, seven years from the Voting Rights Act, four years from the [Fair] Housing Act. Four years from our country saying black people can buy a house wherever they want to, and how many stories were there right through the '60s of black artists not being able to stay in the same hotels as their white friends.

So there were a whole list of reasons why it was a bad idea to have a racially mixed band in 1972, but there was something about the physical embodiment of soul music that meant more than any social or political problems, and somehow Bruce felt comfort in being connected to the past, to tradition, to the race of people that had contributed so much to the music he loved. And in the end that's all that would matter; rock 'n' roll bands always

communicate brotherhood, family, and community, and with Clarence the E Street Band would now communicate all of that, plus complete racial integration. And that would affect everyone who came to see the band from then on.

Music Bed: "The Last Time" – Andrew Loog Oldham Orchestra

STEVEN: We started with "Gotta Get That Feeling," from *The Promise*, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's latest, and I guess last in that form anyway; "Summer on Signal Hill," this one of the great, absolutely classic, instrumentals of all time (it's right there with Joe Meek and Jack Nitzsche, and those classic instrumentals of the '60s), written by Bruce for Clarence, he used it as a B-Side to "Woman's Got the Power"; "Jungleland," Clarence's finest moment; and "If I Should Fall Behind," so we could hear his wonderful voice.

I want to thank Rich Russo and Dave Marsh, and of course my producer Dennis Mortensen, as well as Mark Felsot.

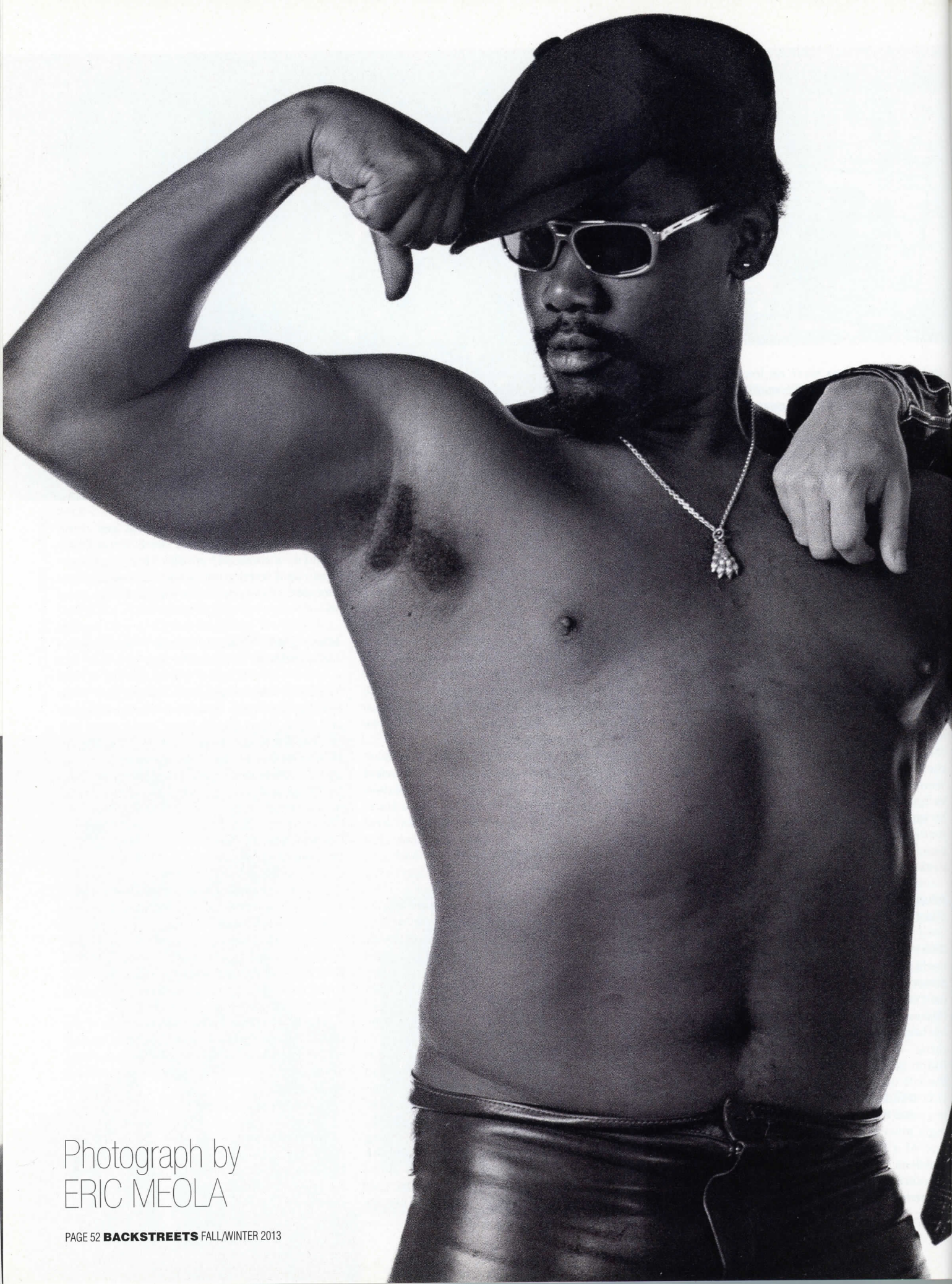
A special thanks to Dennis Constantine from our San Francisco affiliate KSAN, and Paul and everybody else in the office who rose to the occasion of getting the show done under difficult circumstances.

Thank you Alan Freed, who was one of the first DJs to bring black music to white teenagers, and so played a more direct role, perhaps, in the life of the E Street Band, and we thank him for that.

See you next week. 🍷

This two-hour special, "For Clarence," aired on Friday, July 1, 2011, on Sirius XM Radio's Underground Garage channel, created and produced by Steven Van Zandt. Shooting script printed with permission.

MICHAEL ZORN PHOTO



Photograph by
ERIC MEOLA

CLARENCE

JANUARY 11, 1942 - JUNE 18, 2011



BY ROBERT SANTELLI

Clarence Clemons was a “big man” in more ways than one. Start with his size. Physically, he resembled a hulking left tackle or a defensive down lineman, and, not surprisingly, football was part of his pedigree. In the early days of the E Street Band, he looked as if he could still suit up, walk out onto a field, and hold his own there, even if his playing days were over, thanks to a number of nagging injuries, some sports-related, some not.

He might have been as big as a pro football player, but Clarence Clemons rarely demonstrated the ferocity of one. He was the “Big Man” to all of us who admired his sax sound and style, not to mention his impressive size. But he could just as easily have gone by the nickname, “Gentle Giant.” About the only aggressive thing that came from Clarence Clemons when he was in front of an audience were those soaring solos that elevated a good many Springsteen songs into the rock ‘n’ roll rafters.

Clarence Clemons was a towering musician who commanded more attention on the E Street stage than anyone other than Springsteen, especially in his younger years when he was more agile and active. He covered ground and caught all the cues Springsteen sent his way. Together they proved every night the very definition of rock ‘n’ roll friendship. Then with his horn, Clarence Clemons suggested through his silhouetted presence that rock ‘n’ roll was built from strength and stamina, of which he had both, in spades.

And there was something else musically “big” about The Big Man. When he joined up with Springsteen before there was ever an official E Street Band, he

brought a part of rock 'n' roll's past—honking sax parts and a cool R&B swagger—into Bruce Springsteen's present. It made a difference in the music. This happened at a time when precious few other black saxophone players had a place on the rock stage, and when rhythm & blues seemed all but obsolete. Nattily dressed in various shades of red and pink, hat on head, shades wrapped around a smiling face, Clarence Clemons cut quite a sight and gave us quite a sound. For years, decades even, it was impossible to think of the E Street Band without Clarence in it... Then it became necessary.

He is gone now, but on tour Springsteen and the rest of the E Street Band fondly recall him and all that he meant to the music. The roar from the fans is deafening when it happens. It's as if by sheer volume and tenacity we could somehow bring him back. And then there's young Jake, his nephew, courageously stepping into the Big Man's shoes, blowing hard and heavy and at the same time unabashedly acknowledging the fact that the best he'll be able to do on any given night is *approximate* the sound that used to come from that side of the stage.

Clarence Clemons was something. A great musician, a powerful performer, a person who never took for granted the opportunities that came his way. So, how did it happen? How did he come to be such an essential part of Springsteen's sound and stage show, a critical member of the E Street Band? How did he become "the Big Man," or simply "Clarence," as if we knew him so well that to include his last name in any conversation was simply unnecessary. The answer is shrouded in rock 'n' roll myth and glory.

We all know, of course, the wonderful telling of the tale by Springsteen. Despite all the years he's laid it on us, it still makes for the perfect stage story: full of histrionics, melodrama, and sheer fun. For starters, there's the cold and lonely Asbury Park boardwalk, and the wicked wind blowing in from the ocean. Signs are flapping. Sand is whipping across the near-empty parking lot and nearly blasting the paint off the sides of the battered rock club in the distance. The amusement rides, wet and weathered by being so close to the ocean, seem like relics of a long lost past. Have I set the scene right so far?

The solitary musician comes out of the darkness and carries a case with a horn inside. He is big and black and he walks like a man on a mission. He steps from the

salty mist that hovers above the nearby street lamp and opens the door of the club. Suddenly, there's a crash: either the wind blows the door off its hinges, or it departs into the night because one particularly powerful dude opened it. Whatever is the case, one thing is certain: the act alters the course of rock 'n' roll in the early seventies.

One of my all-time favorite Springsteen songs is "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," but as musical biography, it leaves out too much information. Before "Big Man joined the band," what had he been doing, and did Springsteen find him, or vice versa?

During my many years covering Bruce and the E Street Band, first for the *Asbury Park Press* and then for a dozen or so music magazines and finally book projects, I had the opportunity to interview Clarence Clemons many times, officially and otherwise. He wasn't a captivating or articulate subject. I don't think he particularly

CLARENCE WAS A GREAT MUSICIAN, A POWERFUL PERFORMER, A PERSON WHO NEVER TOOK FOR GRANTED THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT CAME HIS WAY.

enjoyed being grilled by journalists, even those he knew. He was always courteous, but often vague and anxious for the interview to end. And when it came time to answer the question about how he and Bruce met, he wouldn't say much, preferring to stick to the storyline described in the song and often repeated by Springsteen from the concert stage.

Once I interviewed Clarence for *Relix* magazine. It occurred in Red Bank, New Jersey where he had just opened up his club, Big Man's West, so if memory serves me well, it must have been in the early '80s. At one point in the interview I asked how it was that he first connected with Springsteen. Here is a portion of the dialogue:

Me: When did you meet Springsteen for the first time?

Clemons: About twelve years ago. Or more. I can't really remember. All I know is it was pretty much like Bruce tells the story on stage. I walked into the Student Prince. You remember where the Student Prince was?

Me: Sure, just a block or two away

from the Asbury Park boardwalk. It was a big hangout for people who lived on the Monmouth College [now University] campus.

Clemons: Right, right! Well, one night I walked into the Student Prince. It was rainy and real cold and the wind was blowing. When I opened the door, no lie, a big gust of wind just tore the damn door right off its hinges, right off the wall. And it just blew down the street! So I walk in and go up to Bruce, who at the time was leading the Bruce Springsteen Band, and said 'Can I play with ya tonight?' And he says, lookin' like he saw a ghost or something, 'Sure, sure! You can do anything you want!'

[laughter]

From what most people who were at the Student Prince that night remember, that's pretty much what happened. The wind could be downright nasty coming off the ocean during a Nor'easter (one was blowing that night), and any of us who've ever lived close to the beach probably can recall an incident or two when a screen door or such got ripped off its hinges during a good blow. That it happened when Clarence first went to play with Springsteen at the Student Prince was fortunate, since Springsteen has used the now-

legendary story so effectively for so long that it's become rock 'n' roll mythology.

Springsteen might have been surprised to see Clarence that night, or that moment, and he certainly was taken aback by the manner in which Clarence entered the Student Prince. But it wasn't as if Springsteen hadn't known about Clemons. The fact is he'd been scouting him for a while.

Back in the late '60s and early '70s, Springsteen made a point of knowing all the good musicians on the Shore. He already was aware of the fact that to surround oneself with good musicians meant inevitably sounding better yourself. He already had some of the best players at the Shore with him onstage: David Sancious, Danny Federici, Vini Lopez. But what he didn't have was a saxophone player who could kill it like King Curtis—someone Springsteen always admired—and who could bring a new dimension, a new sensibility to the band, one that Springsteen couldn't deliver himself simply because he wasn't black.

Springsteen knew about Clarence Clemons because a friend and singer,



ERIC MEOLA PHOTO
Karen Cassidy, had told Bruce about him. Cassidy knew about Clarence because the two of them were in the same band together: Norman Seldin and the Joyful Noyze. Cassidy raved to Springsteen about Clarence's chops and onstage presence, and to Clarence she gushed about Springsteen's gift to sing, play, write, and perform. Karen Cassidy might not be a name familiar to Jersey Shore music fans, but she was responsible for putting Bruce Springsteen and Clarence Clemons together, and she was a pretty decent soul and blues singer herself who could more than hold her own in any Jersey Shore club of her choosing.

One night when the Joyful Noyze was playing the Wonder Bar in Asbury Park, the Bruce Springsteen Band was playing the Student Prince. It was a short walk for Clarence Clemons, and even though it was windy and rainy, he had a hunch. We all know the story from there.

At the time, Norman Seldin and the Joyful Noyze provided Clemons with a steady gig. Seldin was a professional musician. He had a huge red Jewish Afro and glasses and played keyboards like nobody's

business. He hustled and angled his way up and down the Shore, in white clubs and black. He lived and breathed soul music and seemed to have experienced every aspect of the music business before he began to shave. He made records, sold records, produced records. He staged concerts and promoted them. He was into the business of music in a way that made nearly every other Shore musician at the time seem downright dumb. And he got gigs.

If he got one in a hotel lounge, he took it. If he was contracted to play a boardwalk bar, he played it. High school dance? Sure. Bar Mitzvah? Why not. But the Joyful Noyze wasn't the kind of band that harbored the same aspirations that Springsteen's Steel Mill or the Bruce Springsteen Band did. Springsteen's bands played original material. Joyful Noyze played mostly the hits, the kind of songs that went over well when people were listening with drinks in their hands. And when Springsteen asked Clemons to join his band, he already had a recording contract.

Although Seldin thought highly of Springsteen as a musician, he didn't think

much of his chances of one day becoming a name beyond the Jersey Shore. That's why he told Clemons that to join him and to leave the Joyful Noyze was a mistake. "Look, I didn't want to lose him, he was really good for us," Seldin remembered recently. "Plus, I really believed we had a shot of doing something big, and I wanted him to be a part of it."

In his 2009 book, *Big Man*, Clemons recalled the conversation with Seldin, who said all the right things, but they didn't convince Clemons to change his mind. "I know all that, Norman," said Clemons. "What can I say, man? I've decided to give it a shot."

"I had a hunch," Clarence told me years later. "I had no idea it would change my life, but it did. It worked out pretty well, you know?"

These days Norman Seldin shakes his head when discussing the most famous musician ever to play in one of his bands. "I give Clarence a lot of credit. He saw and heard something I didn't. He saw and heard the future of rock 'n' roll and then became part of it. As a musician, what more can you ask for?"

REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS



STORMIN' NORMAN

Clarence Clemons: My Friend for Over 40 Years. By NORMAN SELDIN

It seems like just yesterday when a kind and smiling “Big Man” had a flat tire right across the street from the nightclub on Route 35, less than a half-mile from the Asbury Park circle. It was 1970, I was playing the John Barleycorn, and I walked someone looking for a phone to call about fixing his flat on this chilly night.

I was just going on break, and I wound up being the first to greet Clarence Clemons. He looked a little strangely at my oversized afro cut—which was like Billy Preston’s, but on a white guy—laughed and said hi, then immediately looked over and saw the bandstand. “Is there a band playing here tonight?” he asked, so I introduced myself, and he immediately followed up with, “Do you let people sit in?”

I asked what he played. “Tenor sax.” I said, “If you have your sax with you, bring it in, and let’s do some songs next set.” So he made the call about fixing the tire and then immediately broke out the sax.

“What’s on your setlist?” he asked. I told him anything he’d like to do, but no Top 20—R&B,

blues, classic rock ‘n’ roll, or just an outright jam. I said, “How about ‘Soul Serenade’ by King Curtis?” Clarence jumped back and said, “What?! You’re telling me that you know that song, and you want to do it unrehearsed? I said, “Give me the key you’d like it in—let’s do it.”

The club owners, along with the crowd, looked very stunned at a black musician all of a sudden on stage with Stormin’ Norman Seldin & the Joyful Noyze. You see, that wasn’t done at that time because of a silent color barrier—which was just as bad or worse than what was going on down south. We played “Soul Serenade” along with another hour of tremendous music and chemistry. When we finished the set, my longtime drummer Barry Lynn said, “You’re going to ask him to join the band right now, aren’t you?” I said, “Watch me.”

I went over to Clarence and said, “Would you like some bookings with this band?” He responded with, “Could I really have a gig?” I said to a stunned but smiling Clarence, “How about four or five nights a week for the next year?”

Clarence said, “Are you serious? You can’t do that around here just like that.” I said that we were totally serious, and yes, I can do it just like that. I explained the color barrier had been broken by me in 1964 as a very young musical prodigy, I owned my own booking agency... so is it yes or no?

Clarence was so thrilled, and so were we—we all felt like he had already played with us for years, because the sound was solid, musical, and a perfect blend and fit. We immediately took new photos of us—casual, in tuxedos—and lined up a first recording session that would include Clarence.

The rough part came when club owners where we were booked started calling me and saying, “Please tell us that it’s not true.” What’s not true? “That you have a n----- in your band.”

I responded with the fact that I’d added a new member, and he was negro, not a n-----, and he was definitely with my band. They responded by putting a cancel on about six months worth of booked venues because of a black man being in the band. I said it was talent



my band was made up of, not color, religion, or anything else! In 40 years I never told Clarence about losing the performances because of that.

We went to other open-minded owners and promoters to fill the dates. We thrived and rocked every place the Joyful Noyze performed, and the same people called back seven or eight months later to re-book the dates. I naturally turned down most of them and charged the rest about 40 percent more!

People didn't think I was aware, but it was well-known to me that Bruce Springsteen had taken a natural liking to Clarence. My lead singer Karen Cassidy had told Bruce (who was also her friend) about the best sax man she ever heard, and Bruce was looking for that missing piece.

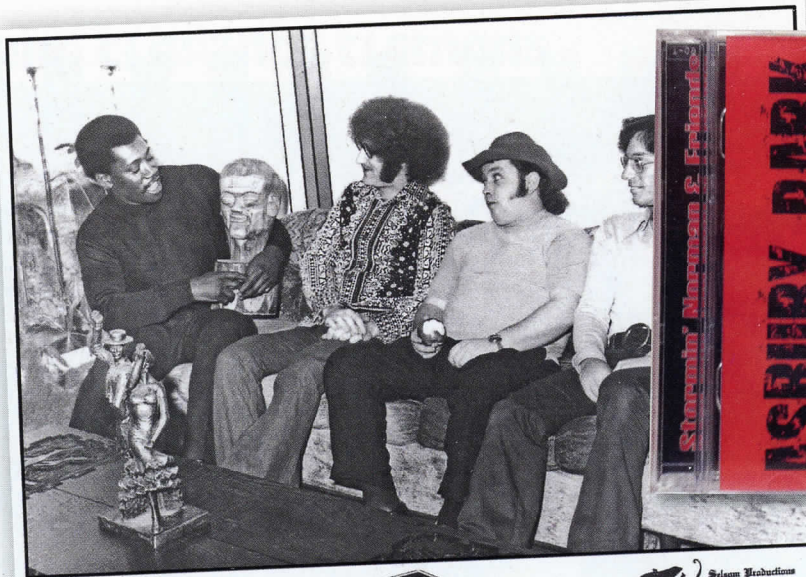
So he came in a few times to sit in on guitar—Bruce came to multiple engagements at the Beacon Manor during the summer and sat in, doing solid rock 'n' roll and raising things to an even higher level. I always marveled at how authentic and solid Bruce was as a lead guitar player, and it was certainly a natural fit for the two of them. It was only a matter of time before Clarence came in to tell me he



was giving his notice to play with Bruce and the E Street Band. I was upset, and I even said it's a long shot... but I've been wrong before. It turned out to be history in the making.

I did not talk to or see Clarence for more than five years after that. He was busy with the band, and I was in a different circuit; there were also still some hard feelings that took some time to work out. Until one night when I was performing, someone came up to me at the piano and said, "There's a 'Big Man' who wants to know if he can sit in." I looked over, and there was Clarence with his horn, home from a road tour. Back he came at the Lock Stock & Barrel, and within two weeks, Max Weinberg and Garry Tallent became sort of my backup band while they were off tour. The owner even bought a set of drums to keep there for Max, and I bought Garry an upright bass for a birthday present.

We ended up doing a full-blown recording session with Clarence, Garry, Max, Danny, and Roy, along with many other all-star players, which are now classic recordings only available on the double-CD set *Asbury Park Then & Now* by Stormin' Norman & Friends. We did eight tracks including one instrumental at the initial sessions in 1978-1979.



Norman Seldin
Joyful Noises



At the E Street Band's last Madison Square Garden appearance in New York [in 2009], Clarence had paid for two premier seats and rooms for my wife Jamey and myself. We visited backstage, where he whispered in my ear that he was hurting and out of gas but hoped he could finish strong for Bruce and his bandmates, and to pray for him. I could see in his face that things were not good.

A couple days later I had two phone calls, one from his personal assistant Lani Richmond and one from him, to make sure I watched Jon Stewart's *Daily Show* that night about the *Big Man* book. I promised to make sure we would all watch the show. A few minutes into the interview, Jon said, "One of my favorite

things in the book is when you talk about Norman Seldin." Clarence talked about how me integrating my band, giving him the opportunity to play

when no one else would have, helped to mold his name and put him with Bruce. They even talked about those special recordings on *Asbury Park Then & Now*. It was his way of giving back, which I never asked of him—only people very close to Clarence or myself could realize how special those words were, going out to such a large audience.

We talked many times while he was in New York City, before his surgery, but then many months passed, because I promised no phone calls would be coming to him from me, just letters—I wanted him to be left alone to heal and rehab from his exhaustion from the long tour. I even mailed his birthday present to him instead of going down to Florida, where he had invited Jamey and me to come. When he started playing some of the Florida casinos, we were talking steadily then—Clarence said he was rehabbing daily but hurt all over. As the weeks went by, his energy became less each day. I watched him on *American Idol* with Lady Gaga, and they only showed a shadow of Clarence. It was then that I knew things were very bad.

After his stroke, I wrote a newspaper piece called "Prayers for the Big Man," but two days later I got the call from Lani and his wife that he had passed. That's when the phone calls started coming in on every one of my numbers, from *Rolling Stone*, *Associated Press*, and dozens of other writers. Pretty soon, I refused to talk any more.

Clarence Clemons was a man with a bigger heart and compassion for others like no one I've ever known. Always ready to give and not to get. A religious person with both a love and fear of God. To me, there will never be another like Clarence. He revived the saxophone in the eyes of the world, and he spread joy and happiness to everyone who he was in contact with.

I did not discover Clarence Clemons; I just gave him the opportunity to be himself. And yes, the rest is history. His loyalty and love to Bruce, his band members, and also to me can never be questioned. We will all miss the one and only Big Man. 🎷



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF NORMAN SELDIN

VINI LOPEZ

Interview by ROBERT SANTELLI

Original E Street Band drummer Vini Lopez enjoyed a special relationship with the late Clarence Clemons. They were band mates during the dawn-ing days of the E Street Band, performing and recording together in the early 1970s, and they were also roommates, on the road and off. In a candid interview from the Jersey Shore, Lopez recalls his friend and fellow musician.

BACKSTREETS: When was the first time you and Bruce actually met Clarence?

LOPEZ: It was right around the time that Child was turning into Steel Mill. We were playing at an Asbury Park club called Pandemonium, and one night a mutual friend of ours, Karen Cassidy, came to see us. She knew a lot of people in the local music scene, and she told us about a saxophone player named Clarence Clemons. So, me and Bruce, and Danny [Federici] and Tinker [Carl "Tinker" West, Steel Mill's manager] piled into Tinker's car one night to hear the band Clarence was playing in at the time, Joyful Noyze. We were really impressed with what we heard, but with the kind of music we were doing at the time, a saxophone really didn't fit in. Plus, we really weren't into stealing a musician from another band. But Bruce took note. I think Bruce filed away Clarence's name for something he might do in the future.

You say you and Bruce were impressed with Clarence at the time. In what way?

We loved the way he sounded, the way he played. But we weren't looking for a sax player at the time. Even the bands that followed Steel Mill—Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom and the Bruce Springsteen Band—they didn't have a place for Clarence. But that would change.

There were a number of good horn players at the Shore in the late '60s and early '70s. Some of them were members of the Bruce Springsteen Band, Bruce's big-sounding, soul-rock band. What made Clarence stand out?

Clarence had the ability to make the sax pop and growl like no one else at the Shore at the time. Clarence had lungs, man. He made the sax sound exactly the way we needed it to sound.

When Clarence joined up with Bruce, how did the band's sound change?

Once Bruce had made the decision to go in a brand-new direction, musically, Clarence's

sax became an important piece of the musical puzzle. It just fit, like it was always meant to be there, and despite the fact that the band he had been playing in was, essentially, a cover band. We were doing all originals, and Clarence, of course, knew none of them. We had to rehearse; we spent a lot of time rehearsing.

and worked it into what he did onstage. He loved the idea of the two of them sort of working out the music physically. They leaned on each other, worked off each other right from the early days. I was at a New Year's Eve show once—this was after I was out of the band—when Clarence was chasing Bruce around the stage, and Bruce tripped, and Clarence fell on him. Bruce almost didn't get up. You didn't want Clarence falling on you! When Clarence got the spotlight, he used it.

Despite their relationship in the studio and onstage, Bruce and Clarence didn't room together, right?

That's right. I roomed with Clarence. Me and Clarence also did a lot of the driving from gig to gig. We listened to a lot of radio—a lot of gospel music, because that's what was on the radio late at night in the South and Midwest. We stayed in the same hotel room—when we had hotel rooms. Sometimes Danny would stay with us, too. Clarence snored a lot. Sometimes it was so loud that I'd sleep in the bathtub, away from all the racket. Man, that guy could snore. We had our differences, too, but we made the relationship work. It was like a marriage, you have your ups and downs, but we made it work.

When you got back home, I believe, you also lived with Clarence. You once told me he was a pretty good cook.

Oh yeah, we lived together: it was me and Clarence and Danny. It was a place in Long Branch, not far from Asbury Park. I loved to go fishing. I'd catch a few fluke and bring them home, and Clarence would clean them and cook 'em up. Tasty little critters. It was a good living situation as far as eating was concerned. I'd catch the fish, Clarence would cook them, and Danny would make spaghetti. We ate well, if I must say.

Was it around this time that Clarence was starting to be known as "the Big Man?"

I don't remember there being an official thing happening where all of a sudden he was the Big Man. I called him C.C., like in the song, "C.C. Rider." Clarence was C.C. to me, but to the rest of world he'd soon be known as the Big Man because he was just that: he was big physically and musically. He also had a big smile and a big heart. Yeah, he was the Big Man. That was the right nickname for him. 🐾



An early promotional shot of the E Street Band in Asbury Park. L-R: Danny Federici, Vini Lopez, Garry Tallent, Bruce Springsteen, David Sancious, Clarence Clemons.

Bruce would instruct Clarence as to what kind of horn lines a particular song needed. Bruce would sort of sing it out, and Clarence would turn it into music. They worked real close together on that. What ultimately came out were not typical sax lines. They were unusual, original. They were the result of this unique relationship between Bruce and Clarence. And they were perfect for what we needed at the time.

When does that unique relationship begin to show itself onstage?

Right away. You noticed it right away. People in the audience, our fans noticed it—and they loved it. And the rest of us in the band, we noticed it, too. Look, here's this big black guy in a band with a bunch of skinny white guys at a time when things like that didn't happen often. Clarence stood out. People were drawn to Clarence. Bruce spotted that immediately

REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

BOOM CARTER

Interview by ROBERT SANTELLI

Ernest "Boom" Carter is best known to Bruce Springsteen fans for, arguably, the most recognizable of all E Street Band drum parts: the propulsive roll that begins the song, "Born to Run." It was one of the last contributions Carter made to Springsteen's sound before leaving the E Street Band in mid-1974 with keyboards player David Sancious to form the jazz-rock fusion band, Tone. These days, Boom Carter lives in the Bay Area and often performs with Michael Franti. He also does regular nightclub and studio work. Carter says of Clarence, "He was like my big brother."

When was the first time you met Clarence?

It was when I auditioned to take the place of Vini Lopez in the E Street Band. Vini had left the band and there was no drummer, so Davey Sancious suggested me. I met with Bruce and the band at Davey's house to play with them and see if there was a fit. Clarence was with Bruce and the other members of the band that day. That's the first time I met him.

If I'm not mistaken, you weren't living on the Jersey Shore then.

That's right. I was living in Atlanta. When Bruce and the E Street Band played Atlanta, Davey gave me a call and invited me to the show. Bruce told me that he needed a new drummer, so I got on a bus, came back to Jersey, and tried out.

What was your initial impression of Clarence?

He was like my big brother, and the fact that he played great sax, too, was just amazing. He kind of took me under his wing. I had to learn a lot of music in a short time. Clarence was really helpful; he guided me through the music and made sure I was comfortable. Davey did that, too. But it was good to have two musicians helping me find my way.

At that time, the E Street Band had three African-Americans in the band: you, Davey, and Clarence. That was quite rare for rock bands back then.

We didn't look at the situation that way. We were all musicians, you know. Clarence had come from Maryland, where things weren't always like they were in Jersey. And even in Jersey, things could get hard for a black musician. But generally speaking, it was a color-blind band. Clarence was such a big physical presence onstage that people in the audience couldn't help but see that he was black. But his presence was a warm presence. He sent out good vibes. Race wasn't really an issue.



IT WAS ALL ABOUT EXPANDING HIS MUSICAL HORIZONS... CLARENCE WAS ALWAYS LISTENING.

Bruce had a special relationship with Clarence onstage, even back then, when the band was just getting on track.

First of all, Clarence always kept things loose, onstage and off. We weren't making any real money. We toured a lot, and the conditions were always tight. As I said, Clarence was a big guy, so it was especially tight for him. But he never complained. I think he was proud to be in the band, and he saw that with Bruce, there was definitely a future. Onstage and in rehearsals, the one thing I most remember was the focus that Bruce and Clarence both had. I mean, they were reacting to each other in a way that was clearly special. I don't know how it started, because I wasn't there when they met. But, man, you could feel it. There was a special bond those two had, and it made our shows so much better because of it.

You roomed with Clarence when you were in the E Street Band, no?

I did. After I came back to Jersey from Atlanta, I lived with my parents for a while, but then me and Clarence got a place in Sea Bright. (Located just south of Sandy Hook, Sea Bright was one of the northern-most beach towns on the Jersey Shore, about ten miles from Asbury Park.) Before that I think he was living with

Vini Lopez. The one thing I remember about our place was that it was clean. Most musicians' places aren't always that clean, but ours was really clean. Clarence made sure of that. He liked to bring the ladies over, you see. But he was also a really good cook. I mean, he'd barbecue like crazy, and he loved his fish. We could catch fish right there on the beach. I ate pretty well with Clarence. I don't think there was anything he couldn't cook.

What were you guys listening to back then?

For Clarence, it was always someone who played the saxophone. Everybody knows of Clarence's connection to King Curtis; he played just like him. But he also liked Joe Henderson. He was fascinated with Joe Henderson when we lived together. Clarence always had his records on the turntable. He would practice to Joe Henderson records. He also liked Jr. Walker—you know, the Motown saxophone player who did "Shotgun" and some other hits. Clarence also listened to jazz, but he never considered himself a jazz saxophone player. It was all about expanding his musical horizons. He wanted to know what other sax players were doing at the time. He was always listening.

After you left the band, did you keep in touch with Clarence?

Sure, we kept in touch, but he was busy with Bruce, and I was busy with Davey. After I left, the album *Born to Run* just took off. The band just got real busy. Also, Davey and I got busy trying to get our thing off the ground. They were busy times for both of us.

Yet you'd play again on occasion with Clarence's band, the Red Bank Rockers, in the early '80s.

Yeah, I'd sit in at Big Man's West with the Red Bank Rockers. At the time, I was in a blues band called the Fairlanes. Those were good times.

You eventually move to the Bay Area, as does Clarence. Did you see each other out there?

Yeah, he had called me for one gig, but I had broken my hand, so I couldn't play. Then he called me again, and the next thing I know, I'm playing in the Red Bank Rockers for like three or four years. We played together whenever the E Street Band wasn't on the road or in the studio.

When was the last time you saw Clarence?

It was a long time. It probably was when we last played together. After his death, I remember thinking that it was too long. And now it's too late. What more can I say? 🐉



Union, NJ, 1974.



photographs by
**JAMES
SHIVE**



photographs by
BARBARA PYLE

Oklahoma
City, 1975.

Roy Bittan and Clarence,
'neath that giant Exxon sign.



REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

MIKE APPEL

Interview by CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS photographs by BARBARA PYLE

Mike Appel, who managed Bruce Springsteen and his band from the early- to mid-1970s, calls Clarence “the member of the E Street Band that I was closest to.” Their bond extended to later years, the two men reconnecting long after Appel and Springsteen’s acrimonious post-*Born to Run* split. In 2011, Mike shared with Clarence his vision of the Big Man entering E Street Heaven: “Can you imagine me actually saying this to this freaking guy, a week or two before his actual death?”

You were working with Bruce initially as a solo artist; when you met Bruce, though, he and Clarence had already connected. Do you recall your first meeting with Clarence?

It was with the other musicians as well—with the other guys who would become the E Street Band. As I met everybody—when it was decided that Bruce would, in fact, have a band—I met Clarence.

It caused something of a division into camps: John Hammond, Sr. and I were on one side

[seeing Bruce as a solo artist], and my partner Jimmy Cretecos and Clive Davis were on the other side. Bruce was headed to the Clive Davis side as well, because he wanted to have a band, not just his own little acoustic thing. Bruce wanted a real band that he toured with all the time, that he could count on all the time.

I said, “Oh, my God, you don’t need that—with lyrics like you’ve got, you just stand up there and rattle them off and the whole world’s gonna bow down!” That’s what John Hammond said, too, but we were out-voted because Bruce was literally the deciding vote. He said, “Nah, I want the band.”

So, I lost. I gave in to that one [laughs]. And so did John Hammond. You gotta make concessions along the way... in the end that’s what Bruce wanted, and that’s what he got. And so that’s when I met Clarence.

In terms of Clarence’s role in the band, at what point did you see the indispensable character up there that he became?

Well, it came pretty early. It got stronger

and stronger over time, because Bruce would use their connection more and more as the stage show developed, but it came quickly. And Clarence’s ability... here’s a little story.

Early on, in 1972, I got the band to play Sing Sing Prison. I called the warden up and I told him, “Bruce Springsteen, the Columbia recording artist, would like to come up and entertain the prisoners.” It worked for Johnny Cash, you know, Folsom Prison and all that stuff. So I figured, what the heck, it might work for us as well. We talked about that [in *Backstreets* #90], but I don’t think I gave you the full picture of how crucial Clarence was that day.

We went through one of the most intense searches that I ever went through, a pat-down to end all pat-downs, and we finally get inside the prison, we set up all our sound equipment. My partner Jimmy Cretecos was handling the sound duties, and he was having problems—there was no sound. We couldn’t get the system to work. This forced Jimmy to walk constantly up and down the aisle, and now the prisoners are starting to get antsy.



Rehearsing for the *Born to Run* tour, July 1975.

Now, Jimmy was a very slender guy with long, flowing, strawberry blond hair hanging down his back, and he wore these tight jeans... so every time he walked from the stage to the sound console, all these catcalls and whistles came up from all the prisoners, because he was the closest guy to a woman in this place. It was embarrassing. And the more you can't get the sound... you're being frustrated by that, and this guy has to keep walking back and forth, and the prisoners just don't let up.

One of the prisoners says to me, "How come there's no girl dancers with Bruce?" I said, "Well, the warden told us we couldn't have any." (Which was absolutely true. I went through a checklist with the warden and he said, "You can't have any girl singers. No girl dancers. That's it.") So this guy says, "Fuck the warden." This is where these guys are at. And now they're starting to stomp on the floor and really get angry.

And Clarence—just out of the blue, Clarence starts to play. He's not playing into any system or any microphone, he's just up there on stage, and he starts blowing his saxophone. Instinctively, Bruce and the rest of the band join him. And they ride this thing for 45 minutes to an hour. The sound *never comes back on*. These guys did an hour show, completely instrumental, no power.

You don't know what an hour is like when you can't sing a word, you can't *say* a word, you gotta just keep playing. Only Springsteen could get away with this kind of shit. He walks on water. I mean, he just does. He did even then. But Clarence was the one who provoked the whole thing; it was him who got the band started and the whole ball rolling.

Clarence was absolutely the star up there. Nobody told him, nobody said anything—he just started. God knows what could have happened. There could have been a prison riot. It would have been like one of those James Cagney movies, the prisoners end up getting machine-gunned. For an instant I actually gave that a thought: God almighty, this could really turn terrible if we don't get our act together here. Not to mention the fact he's a black man—the guys in the prison are 90 percent black, and the rest is Latino. Us, the sound crew, we're practically the only white guys in the prison. So Clarence really saved the day for us—he saved my ass.

I'm curious how you think race affected things, especially in those early days. Norman Seldin talked about the repercussions of breaking the color barrier. Did that affect your ability to get gigs for Bruce and the band?

Well, with Clarence... first of all, we never played much down south, so we didn't face that. We never faced anything like that at all. But remember, in the '70s, our crowd was

Right: Photographer Barbara Pyle shot the E Street Band's passport photos for their first European tour, supporting *Born to Run* in the fall of 1975.



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college kids and college campuses. And those kids weren't into that. There was no real problem with a black guy—in fact, it was *cool* that Bruce Springsteen had this big, obvious black guy playing saxophone. And Clarence is an active guy—he says things during the night, Bruce plays off him, tells stories—so it became this very cool thing. Clarence became an enormous (no pun intended) asset. Race really never entered into it, as far as being a problem.

Once Bruce put that band together, all of a sudden your job must have gotten a lot more complicated. You're not just dealing with one guy anymore. What was your relationship with Clarence like?

We took care of so many things for Clarence, on a personal level and a business level. Clarence called me Boss a long time before Bruce was labeled with that moniker. Clarence would call me every time he and Vini got into fights, because Clarence liked to smoke pot, and Vini couldn't stand that. It drove him nuts. Or Clarence would call me and say, "I got something from child support..." because he didn't pay his child support payments or something like that, and he'd call me so I'd run to the bank and get money to him [laughs].

Having five wives tells you a little bit about Clarence's head when it comes to women. I mean, my God, did you have to marry them all? [laughs] He married so many of them, it's like, "Clarence, did you not learn from the first and second experience?"



Well, he's a romantic!

He's a romantic [laughs]. That's absolutely true, so who am I to tell him? But he was always a little bit all over the lot in his personal life when I was handling them, and we had to especially watch him, because if he didn't make a child payment one or two times, he could end up getting locked up. And I'd be the one to have to bail him out!

I'll never forget when Danny Federici got picked up for speeding. I was in bed in a hotel down in Richmond, Virginia, and I get a call—because, you know, they're allowed to make one call. Vini's on the phone, and and he says to me, "We're all in jail."

I said, "What? You're all in jail?" He tells me where they are, I get there and walk in and I see them all behind bars, the entire E Street



Band. Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, here they are, ladies and gentlemen! [Laughs]

First thing I said: "I don't know who these guys are!" When I said that, you should have seen those guys, they went bananas! They figured I was crazy enough to walk out on them. Of course we bailed them out, and everybody went to the hotel. But it was just so funny—you should have seen their faces. When I think about things like that, it's just the great joy of my youth.

What about recording with Clarence? There's the sense that improvisation wasn't really his thing—there's the story about the "Jungleland" solo, which was really a Bruce creation, right?

Well, right, that wasn't like I just played the track for Clarence and he just winged it. Obviously "Jungleland" is his most famous solo, and for good reason—but a lot of people don't realize the degree to which Bruce Springsteen was responsible for that solo. I sat in the control room while Bruce literally stood right in front of Clarence and went through it. Bruce was guiding him: "Hit this one... no, no, hit that one..." That kind of stuff.

We kept going through it and going through it, and I kept putting Clarence on different tracks. And then we tried to piece all that together so he could see: "Here's what you do, Clarence, you do this, and then you go over here and you do this..." I would go through maybe 16 saxophone tracks until he got the

idea, and then we'd go back out and he'd piece it together. Clarence goes out and he does it, he gets it: "Okay, I play this part now... okay, I got it."

Then he goes through the whole thing. And finally it's this fluid thing—as he plays it, not something I'm piecing together through some technological bullshit or editing—and it ends up being the thing on the record that *makes* that record, musically. It's his signature solo, and it'll be there ever more.

And even if Clarence wasn't the most improvisational kind of player, he's the type of guy, you throw some chords in front of him he'll start to play something—a harmony line here or a harmony line there—and what he is, he's a master of never screwing up. Never playing a note where you say, "Oh, God, what did he hit that note for?"

What else comes to mind when you think about Clarence back then?

In the old days on the 747s they used to have these bars in the back, and an electric piano too, and Clarence would go back there and play. Danny or Roy would start playing, and Clarence would bring his saxophone and open it up and start playing—the whole plane would come back there and listen to them play. That's a fond memory. That's how it was for the *Time* magazine interview.

The *Time* interview was on a plane?

Oh yeah, that's how it happened. At first—we'd just gotten *Newsweek*, and everybody was saying to get *Time* was an incredible coup, but Bruce didn't want to. The possibility of doing two covers in the same week, can you imagine? He's still like, "No, no, no, I don't want to do it, it's all silliness and a waste of time."

I said, "You know what? I just got a vision. I got a vision of Danny Federici, Clarence Clemons, Steve Van Zandt, Garry Tallent, and the rest of your band members going up and seeing you on the cover of both of those... can you imagine what they'd think? 'We made it! This is it! We've done it! We're guys from Asbury Park, nobodies, and here we are!'" I get really animated when I tell him this, and I say to him, "Hey, if we get the opportunity to do that, are we gonna take that away from these guys? We're not gonna do it? We're not gonna follow through?"

When I told him about the band, that bothered him, that we would be screwing the band. So that appealed to him. But he was still iffy, so I said, "You know what? I got a great idea. Why don't we have the interview for *Time* on the airplane flying to Los Angeles? It'll take us six, six-and-a-half hours to get out there, it'll be great, it'll be informal, they can talk to the other band members, it'll be all over the place." Of course, Clarence was all over the place.

So that was all at, like, 40,000 feet.

That is what happened on that plane out to Los Angeles. Jay Cocks, who conducted the interview, had a great time, and Bruce had a great, easy time. It was totally informal. They talked to me, they talked to Jon Landau,

they talked to Clarence, everybody's floating around... this is what actually used to happen when we were flying around together. No pressure—it was like rolling off a log.

All these years later, you reunite with these guys... in the last issue, we had that picture of you, Landau, and Springsteen all together in Buffalo [in 2009], and smiling. What was it like to see Clarence again?

He was the member of the E Street Band that I was closest to. The first time I ever came back, after my hassles with Bruce—this is some years back, now, maybe ten years ago—I went backstage; the minute he sees me, Clarence just stares along with all the other E Streeters. But then he turns to me—he's in this big white suit

and a little Charlie Chan white hat—and he puts his fist over his heart, and he just thumps it, you know? Like he's sharing the love of the moment when he finally sees me. It was the kind of thing where we didn't have to see each other for years, and yet whenever we did it's like I never left.

In fact, he started to talk to me about some hassles he had with Steve Van Zandt! I said, "What hassles could you possibly be having with Steve Van Zandt? At this late date?" And he said, "Yeah, he's using my masseuse backstage, but he wants me to pay 100 percent of her bill." I said, "You're right, nothing's changed." [Laughs]

But it's funny, when Bruce invited me up for that Buffalo show... a car comes to pick up me

and my son. It takes us to Newark Airport, and we get on the plane. All of Jon Landau's management team is there. Brian Williams, he's on board with his wife. And of course, everybody in the E Street Band—except for Bruce, he was going to fly out of Boston.

So we're all on the plane, flying up to Buffalo, and then Clarence gets up. He just stands up with a champagne glass in his hand and says to everybody, "If it wasn't for Mike"—and of course this in front of Jon Landau and all those people, and it was embarrassing—"If it wasn't for Mike Appel, none of us would be on this plane." And everybody started clapping. I was like, "Oh, jeez, did you have to say that in front of all these people?" He could have just said it to me on the side and I would have said, "Hey, great, thanks for the compliment." But that's Clarence. He just gets right up.

You stayed in touch after that, didn't you?

Yeah, the next year he called me and he said, "I'm in town, I'm over here at the hospital in Manhattan, I'm going to have surgery on my lower back, why don't you come by?" So I did, and there he was in the hospital, laid up, this big giant guy, and all his little nurses running around trying to help him. I said, "What are you gonna do here?" and he said, "Well, I'm gonna have two of my lower vertebrae fused." Oh, God, I'm holding my back while I'm talking, I feel the pain. But he went through that, somewhere around the end of 2010, and he thanked me very much for coming by to see him. And then he said, "I'll be in touch."

I thought, "He ain't gonna be in touch, what the hell could we do with each other?" You know what I mean? I just didn't give that a thought for a second—until he called me again. In May 2011, he wanted me to join him for dinner in Asbury Park because he and Nick Mead, the *Who Do I Think I Am?* director, they were gonna have a party for that, to celebrate the opening. So I joined them for dinner, and that's where I really struck up with Clarence again.

He said to me, "You know, Mike, I'd like you to come down and work with me." Down to Singer Island in Florida. Clarence is the kind of guy who doesn't think you have a life—he must think I'm just collecting royalty checks, just sitting on my duff somewhere and I'll only be too happy to do something like that. But I said to him, "Well, what do you have in mind?" And he said, "Well, I'd really like you to come down and we can take it from there." So he kept me in the dark about what he wanted me to do. In any case, I flew to Florida to meet with him.

Nick Mead was there, and of course [Clarence's] wife Victoria was there as well, and all this workout equipment, because he's always trying to do something with his back.

This is at Clarence's house?

Yeah, a big condo apartment. We must have been 19 or 20 stories up, and you look down and you see all these sharks in the water. It was a real beautiful sight—a great view, to say the least. And he said, "Mike, I'm writing this three-act movie of my life with Nick Mead,



BARBARA PYLE PHOTO



Hand in hand: reconnecting with Appel in Buffalo, NY, before Clarence's final full concert with the E Street Band at the end of the Working on a Dream tour. November 22, 2009.

we have the beginning and the middle but we don't have an ending." So he wanted me to come up with the ending. And he was serious.

And you thought there was nothing you could do together....

Oh, just wait! So I said, "Clarence, you're going to have to give me everything you got... all your notes you and Nick went through, the book you wrote with Don Reo." And he said, "Okay, it's right in my bedroom." We go into his room, and sure enough he grabs a box of books, he gives me one. He says, "You're my guy. I want you to go and finish that third act."

Clarence clearly felt reconnected with you.

There's no question about it. And I had let him hear the songs from my musical [*In the Shadows of the King*], which also helped. Finally I flew home, and after I went through all the papers and the book and everything, after I thought about it for a while, I called him back. I said, "I think I have an ending for you."

He says, "What is it?"

I said, "It's death."

"Death?"

I said, "Yeah, death. What I see here is this: you're on stage, I see you going through this laser tunnel, and all the greatest dead saxophone players that ever played the horn will appear out of the darkness—you know, guys like Charlie Bird [Parker], Coleman Hawkins, John Coltrane, maybe Dexter Gordon. And there'll be a light, like everyone says they see when they have a near-death experience. You're going to be following that light, and as you do, you're going to start to hear music getting louder and louder and louder as you go through this tunnel. And then when you get to the place where the light is the brightest and the music is the loudest, you'll see the mighty E Street

Band and Bruce playing their collective hearts out. And you'll notice that you're conspicuously absent from the bandstand; however, when Bruce sees you, he'll call you out and you'll join him, and the audience will erupt in tumultuous applause. After all, Clarence, this is E Street Heaven. This is E Street Heaven."

Can you imagine me actually saying this to this freaking guy, a week or two before his actual death?

How did he respond?

He and Nick loved the idea. They wanted me to come down and put all the final dialogue together. And just as I was about to make the arrangements to fly down to see him, Clarence calls to tell me his hand is giving him trouble. He goes, "Mike, I can't even play, my hand is bothering me. I talked to Bruce about it, and he's helping me. Bruce says he wants me to go see a surgeon in California and he's the best." I said, "Okay, okay, I can postpone it, I don't have to come down tomorrow."

And that's the last time I talked to him, that's how fast everything happened. The hand operation, the stroke, the coma, and that was it. I mean, that guy didn't spend any time with some long-protracted illness, it was boom, boom, gone. All of a sudden I heard people saying Clarence Clemons had a stroke... in fact, some people even said that he died.

I said, "How could that possibly be? What are you, crazy? I was just on the phone with this guy, he had a hand problem, he wasn't gonna die."

So that was my send-off with Clarence. And it's funny I would be involved in his life at all, let alone to the extent I was. Jesus, it was like the last moments, I had no idea he had only weeks to live, obviously. I was seeing him in May, and within 30 days, all of these meetings with him, back and forth to Florida and all

those telephone conversations, speaking with him in June...

And the next thing you know, you're back in Florida for a memorial service.

That was it. We had the wake, and the whole thing was just odd. Even though Clarence lived down there and I guess that's why the wake was there, I would much rather have seen it in New Jersey, where the band's roots are. It was an awkward day. Bruce made his speech, you know, his eulogy, and it was great—very sincere. I think he tried to be as honest as he possibly could, and he gave Clarence a great sendoff. And Jackson Browne and the band played, and Nils Lofgren had a song he wrote, "Miss You C." I mean, it was all very nice, I can't say anything bad about it, but it was surreal—like, is this really happening? All these people I don't often see... What are we doing down in Florida right now? I don't go to Florida that often, what the hell am I doing down here? I'd like to go somewhere and just shoot the breeze with Clarence and have a drink and then let him walk off into a haze.


And for me the extra smack upside the head came when I saw Nick Mead—when he sees me, he says, "You know, Clarence wanted you to manage him again." I said, "Are you kidding me?"

Can you imagine the political hassle that would have caused? [*laughs*] Does Clarence take anything like that into consideration?

Of course, I couldn't have done it. I really don't have the time to do that anymore, I'm focused on my own creativity; so that can't happen, and it would have never happened.

And yet there would have been something wonderful about that.

Oh, it would have been a great, fun thing for sure. That's for sure. 🍷

A black and white photograph of Clarence Clemons. He is wearing a white fedora and a white double-breasted suit jacket over a white shirt. He is holding a silver saxophone with both hands, and the instrument is positioned diagonally across the frame. He has a mustache and a goatee, and he is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

I made this portrait of Clarence while he was filming for Scorsese's *New York, New York*. The wardrobe department had given him Tyrone Power's white suit, which they altered to fit him—inside the breast pocket it was embroidered, "Tyrone Power." I have no idea what film Tyrone wore it in, but it became Clarence's signature "look" in those days. It was 1977, and Clarence had just finished the blistering sax solo on "The Promised Land." And he looked grand in this suit, just grand. —E.M.

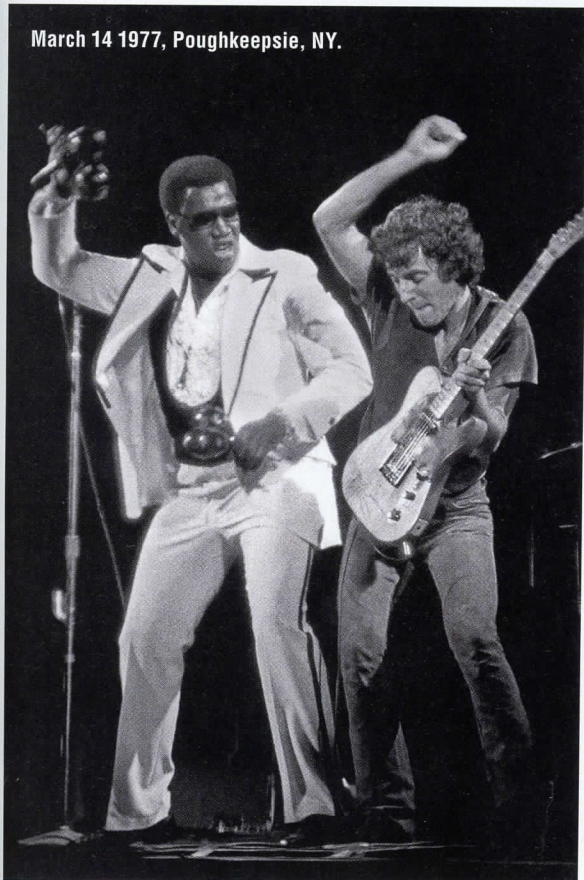
photograph by

ERIC MEOLA



With the Miami Horns in 1976.

March 14 1977, Poughkeepsie, NY.



New Year's at Nassau Coliseum on the River tour, December 31, 1980.

photographs by
JAMES SHIVE



New York City, early 1978.

This page:
photographs by

**FRANK
STEFANKO**

Opposite:
photograph by

**JIM
MARCHESE**

"This photograph shows one of those intense, magical moments of Bruce playing to Clarence and Clarence on his knees, wailing... the memory still gives me chills." —J.M.

On tour for *Darkness*
on the *Edge of Town*, 1978.





May 1981, Johanneshov Ice Stadium, Stockholm, Sweden.

REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

J.T. BOWEN

Interview by ROBERT SANTELLI

Of all those in the Jersey Shore music community to have played with Clarence Clemons, none had known the E Street saxophonist longer than J.T. Bowen. A singer who was once called “the soul of the Jersey Shore,” J.T. Bowen mostly sang in black clubs in Lakewood, Asbury Park, Neptune, and Long Branch before becoming the lead singer in Clemons’ early-1980s side project, Clarence Clemons and the Red Bank Rockers. With a voice that owned the grit and sass of Wilson Pickett and the passion of Otis Redding, Bowen was practically in a class by himself when it came to Shore soul singers. His natural vocal gifts aside, it was also his deep connection to Clemons, both musically and emotionally, that helped make the Red Bank Rockers one of the best bar bands ever along the Jersey coast.

BACKSTREETS: Exactly how far do you go back with Clarence? Where did you two first meet?

BOWEN: Believe it or not, we first met in 1960. At the time Clarence was going to Maryland State College, and he was playing with a band called the Vibratones. They would come to my hometown, a place called Crisfield, Maryland, and play. At the time, I was in a little local band, and when Clarence would come to town, I’d go and see the Vibratones play because, man, Clarence was so good on the saxophone. I just had to hear him blow his instrument. He played just like King Curtis. You just knew that there was something special in the way he handled his instrument.

Is it at this time that you began to develop a friendship with him?

Oh yeah. We talked a lot. We talked about music, what we liked and all that. He was the kind of guy that you would want to have as a friend. But a little later, after he got out of college, he moved to New Jersey, you see. He was working at a place called Jamesburg, with kids, earning a living doing good work with kids, and then in the evening, he’d play his music.

You eventually moved to New Jersey, too. Was it because of Clarence?

Well, first, I got out of high school and then went into the army in 1966. I went to Korea and was stationed on the DMZ. But when I got out of the service two years later, I made the move to New Jersey—to Lakewood—and started playing in bands there, bands like the Soul Flames. At the time, the hot place for



Clarence and J.T. on the back cover of 1983’s *Rescue* (left) and live on stage with the Red Bank Rockers (above).



black musicians to play was on the west side of Asbury Park. There was a group that I’d been hearing about that played the West Side called the Chosen Few. People said I ought to hear the band. As it turned out, the saxophone player in the band was none other than Clarence Clemons! So, I became the lead singer in the band. It was really the first time that we played together, and it was just fate that brought him back into my life, and me into his. We played together until Clarence left the Chosen Few and joined up with another band, the Joyful Noyze.

At the time was Clarence a local star in the black community in Asbury Park?

I don’t know if “star” would be the right word to describe Clarence back then. People who went to bars and listened to local music certainly knew who he was. He was known for his sax playing. Everyone thought, like I did, that he played just like King Curtis, and people appreciated that.

What made Clarence such a good horn player?

Number one, he was dedicated to his instrument and to music in general. Number two, he had a certain passion to blow that horn. I remember talking to him back in Maryland. He would tell me how he wanted to make it in music. It wasn’t about becoming rich and making a lot of money. He wanted people to respect him for the way he played the sax and the music he made. He wanted to play in a really good band where the people around him could bring out the best in him. He worked hard in Maryland, and he was working hard in New Jersey. Every time I went to his house, there he was, playing music or listening to it, or talking about it.

After Joyful Noyze, Clarence joins up with Bruce Springsteen. Did he talk to you about becoming a member of Bruce’s band?

At the time, I didn’t know anything about Bruce. But after Clarence joined up with him, we would talk and he’d say, “Man, you need to



The Red Bank Rockers, 1983.

come see us. You need to see this guy, Bruce." I remember one time, when Boom Carter was in the band playing drums, I went to see them rehearse in the town of Sea Bright, and man, they were good. Clarence had fit right in. I remember being struck by the fact that Clarence and Boom weren't the only brothers in the band. They also had Davey Sancious playing keyboards. Things like that didn't happen very often back then. They were ahead of the times. I respected Bruce for that.

What was your relationship like with Clarence after he became part of the E Street Band?

Well, he was on the road a lot, so I didn't see too much of him. And I was playing with the Chosen Few, and then later in the '70s, after Boom Carter left the E Street Band, we formed a little band called the Soul Patrol and played places like the Stone Pony. But it wasn't until fate intervened again.... somehow, later on, I ran into Clarence at the Shore, and he told me that he was opening up a club, Big Man's West, and he wanted to know if I wanted to work there, handling the door, you know. He said he was going back out on the road with Bruce, and that he needed someone there to watch his back. So I took the gig.

How long after this does Clarence start the Red Bank Rockers?

It wasn't too long after I came to work for him.

He wanted a house band for his club, so he formed Clarence Clemons and the Red Bank Rockers and asked me to be his singer. I was surprised he asked me. I mean, I was the cat who was working the door! I wasn't a bouncer, but I was in charge of other things at the door. Man, I was glad he asked me to sing. I was honored he wanted me to be in his band, because now, Clarence is a big star, you see. He could have gotten anyone to sing in his band. I had no idea he was planning on starting a band. Clarence had a way of doing certain things but wouldn't tell you about it until it was happening. He was like that.

It was a great band, full of energy—great players, a sound that was as big and as soulful as the person who led it.



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Yeah, that's a good way of putting it. We were good. People loved us. They'd come down from New York and over from Philly just to hear us.

When the Red Bank Rockers ultimately end, you pick up the pieces and create J.T. Bowen and the Rockers.

That's right. Things got really big for Bruce and the E Street Band, and the bar thing was something that Clarence really couldn't spend the right amount of time tending to. I just wanted to keep the music going as best I could.

After Clarence left New Jersey, was it tough to keep in touch?

Yeah, you know, I hit some hard times with my addiction. I lost my passion for music. Luckily, I got the help that I needed and was able to bring music back into my life. But Clarence and I drifted apart until fate stepped in again.

In what way?

What happened was my daughter, who is a music promoter, bumped into Clarence at Newark Airport last year. She ran into Clarence, who was in a wheelchair. My daughter's name is Cookie. Clarence said, "Cookie, I'm sorry to hear about your dad," as if I were dead. Because of my past problems with drugs, some people—Clarence included—thought I was dead. Cookie said, "My dad ain't dead; he's alive!" Clarence was shocked and asked for my number. As soon as he got down to his house in Florida, he called me. It was like 27 years since I had heard from him. It was a long time, man. Anyway, he told me that he was having a birthday party, and that he wanted me to come. He sent me a plane ticket, so on his 69th birthday, he and I re-united, played some music, and re-connected our friendship—just before he passed. It was like we had never parted. It was a blessing, man, a blessing. 🙏

TERRY CAMP PHOTO



Bowen and Bruce: Springsteen's first performance after Clarence's death was a tribute concert at the Wonder Bar in Asbury Park, with J.T. and the Sensational Soul Cruisers. July 17, 2011.

"Knew you'd be a vision in white /
How'd you get your pants so tight?"
Riding on the Freeway of Love with
Narada and Aretha, 1985.

NARADA MICHAEL WALDEN

REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

Off E Street, one man Clarence Clemons counted among his closest friends was drummer, producer, singer, and songwriter Narada Michael Walden. How close were the two? "I was the best man at Clarence's wedding," Walden told *Backstreets*, referring to Clarence's fifth and final marriage, to Victoria. "I helped him find her, and they became the best of lovers and friends."

Walden's resume is loaded: he produced and wrote hits for Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey as well as, among others, Lionel Richie, Stevie Wonder, Barbra Streisand, and The Temptations; his soundtrack work has been included in such hit movies as *The Bodyguard*, *Beverly Hills Cop II* and *9 1/2 Weeks*; he is a three-time Grammy award winner, with an Emmy to boot.

In *Big Man*, Clarence described Narada as "the brilliant musician and record producer who changed my life in a major way." From penning the hit single "You're a Friend of Mine" to producing the Big Man's solo album *Hero* and most of its follow-ups, in addition to working together in their band the Temple of Soul (which released an album, *Brothers in Arms*, in 2008), Walden played an important role in Clarence's success outside of the E Street Band. For more than 30 years, he remained an integral part of Clarence's life not only professionally, but personally and spiritually: "Narada is the most spiritual person I know," Clarence continued in *Big Man*, "and at the time I met him, I was disconnected from spirituality totally."

Clarence and Narada were joined in following the path of Sri Chinmoy, the spiritual teacher who gave Walden the name *Narada* (which means "wisdom giver") in the early '70s. Sri Chinmoy also gave Clarence the name *Mokshagun* (according to Clarence in *Big Man*, it's Sanskrit for "Lord's All-illuminating Liberation Fire"), and it was Walden who introduced the two—though his own take is that "the Big Man was a spiritual cat from day one."

As told to CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS

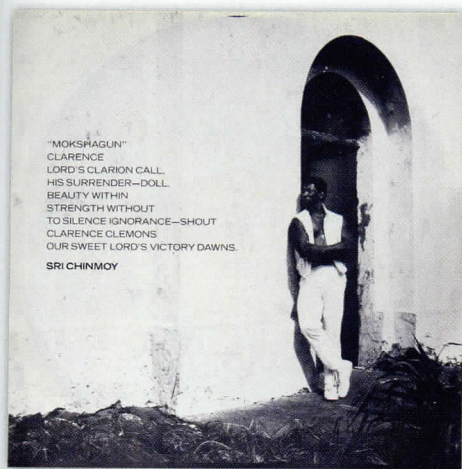
ON MEETING CLARENCE

You know how I met Clarence? We were recording a song for Aretha Franklin. It was suggested to us: "What about Clarence Clemons playing sax on 'Freeway of Love'?" I immediately loved the idea and asked him if he'd take a little break to come to our studios. He came to Automatt Studios in San Francisco and recorded the solo on "Freeway of Love" there. We met and had an instant bond. Such a big heart... I loved him immediately. Really powerful, really strong. We had electricity our first time out.

A GREAT HERO SOLDIER

Hero [1985] came a little later, when I had my own studio, Tarpan Studios. One of the first artists to work here was Clarence—he came, and we put together a group of people he loved... We rehearsed Booker T. [Jones] and his band, Randy Jackson on bass guitar, myself on drums, and Clarence...

I really wanted to have a hit for him. Mostly in a mindset of what Bruce does. I wrote "You're a Friend of Mine" at my house, and we



"MOKSHAGUN"
CLARENCE
LORD'S CLARION CALL
HIS SURRENDER—DOLL
BEAUTY WITHIN
STRENGTH WITHOUT
TO SILENCE IGNORANCE—SHOUT
CLARENCE CLEMONS
OUR SWEET LORD'S VICTORY DAWNS
SRI CHINMOY

The inner sleeve from Clarence's NMW-produced sophomore album, *Hero* [above]; on Clarence's wedding day [right].

showed it to Clarence, and we got the four of us together, and we cut four songs in the same session, in Tarpan Studios when we first opened the doors. And "Friend of Mine" was one of them. I got Clarence's vocals together, and then we had to find... who's the right duet person? If Bruce had wanted to do it, we wouldn't have stopped him, for sure. But that wasn't limiting, because you know, Bruce and Clarence had their own things, they had their own projects to do. And then the idea of Jackson Browne came. Clarence suggested Jackson. That was the Big Man's idea. And Jackson, when he came to do it, he brought Daryl Hannah. And Daryl Hannah sang the bridge part. I mean, I asked her to, she wasn't prepared to... I just talked to her, she was so cute, I really wanted to hear her sing. She did, and we used it.

Working with Clarence as a vocalist was wonderful. A lot of fun. My man's a good vocalist, and he had fun with it. And he doesn't mind the work if you want another take. He's good for that. And I like that. We tried until we got it right, and we felt good, and we were all happy. Our records were always happy records.

On the *Hero* record I called Clarence a "great hero soldier," and what I meant was that he's a hero in every sense of the word, and that he stands up for people. He's the kind of person that will... let's say there are ten people in a room, and eight of them agree one way, but he believes something different—he's got the strength and the conviction of heart to stand up for what he knows is right. Like when you watch that old classic *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Jimmy Stewart, how he stands up in that Senate against everybody, because he knows he's right. We take that lightly, but it's a major, major quality in a human being.

FROM HERO TO THE TEMPLE OF SOUL

He moved here to California, and we were able to work more together, get tighter. We worked with Ronnie Spector on *A Night With Mr. C* [1989]. We didn't have a big significant hit on it, but that was nice, working with Ronnie—I love Ronnie—and it was fun to make.



JO LOPEZ PHOTO, COURTESY OF NARADA MICHAEL WALDEN

Clarence also recorded a few things on my solo albums. "That's the Way I Feel About Cha," he played a great sax solo on my *Divine Emotion* album. He just recently played on this new album that I haven't put out yet, called *Happy*; he did a great solo on that for me. And then of course we also have a gazillion things that we did for Temple of Soul. So we were always doing things together, different projects: live shows, Carnegie Hall, the Sunshine

CLARENCE REALLY IS WALKING HEART. SO MUCH LOVE TO GIVE AND TO RECEIVE.

Concert, Japan '95, his charities in Florida... we were always doing different things together. We were always recording. I arranged at his house this beautiful ballad he had, which I don't think ever came out, either—an Eastern-influenced piece which was meant to be a theme for his documentary [*Who Do I Think I Am? A Portrait of a Journey*]. It was meant to go with that movie. He really loved playing that. It was a very slow ballad, Chinese-themed, really beautiful.

[Director Nick Mead adds: "The song was eventually titled 'Ode to China,' and it's basically the result of Clarence's spiritual journey. The film really is about the creative process for Clarence, using his China experiences to create that song. In fact, the film follows Clarence's trips to various temples before he comes to the realization that his real temple is the recording studio; the last act of the documentary was filmed in San Rafael at Narada's studio, and *Narada* is featured at the end of the film.]"

"HE IGNITES OUR SPIRITS"

The Big Man's a lovely cat. He's just wonderful, and so beloved, and so missed. We have just love and memories, because it was always

love... he really is *walking heart*. So much love to give and love to receive. Everybody he meets, he just kind of chimes to that. He chimes in to that level. Whatever it is... he can chime to a cat on the street, and he can chime to Mother Mary. He can chime to whatever is happening; he can rise to it. Like a chameleon, he's got that ability to be as one with people.

I asked him, "When you're on stage in these stadiums, playing big, big audiences, what do you do? What do you think about so you can really communicate with the person that's way out there, in the far back?" And he said, "Slow motion. I feel like I'm in slow motion, so I can really appeal to that person out there." That's wonderful. I think of that when I'm on the stage with Jeff [Beck] now. I'm always thinking about the folks way in the back. I might not be able to see them, but I want to touch them and feel them, so I go into slow motion—still *playing* quickly, but the *feeling* is communication to them in slow motion. Bruce is great at that, too: Bruce is great at being so intense that wherever you are you're gonna feel him, he wants to be felt everywhere in the house.

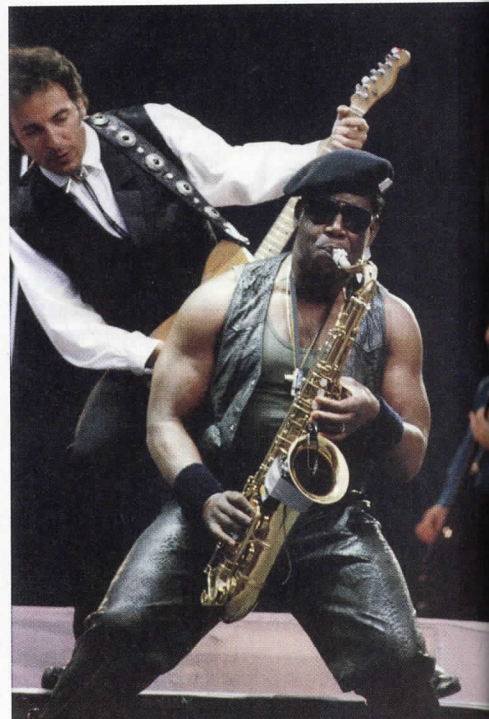
My guru taught me that you have many, many, many friends, but the one friend who will always be kind to you and think of you and who'll always say nice things about you and be so close to you your whole life is the Big Man. Mokshagun Clarence Clemons. And he was named Mokshagun because Mokshagun means "liberation" and "liberation fire." [Sri Chinmoy] felt that when he played his horn and made the sound he makes, he ignited our spirits. So it was the sound of the "liberation fire." He ignites our spirits.

He loved King Curtis, he tried to stay true and pure to the sound of what he loved, and to make it sound as best as he could. He would use his fire when he could and be tender at the same time—so it would burn, and it would be mellow, romantic. So you had both sides of the fence: he had chainsaws and he had the quiet fires. He had both. 🐾



1981 AHoy SPORTPALEIS

FEYENOORD STADIUM 1988





1985 FEYENOORD STADIUM



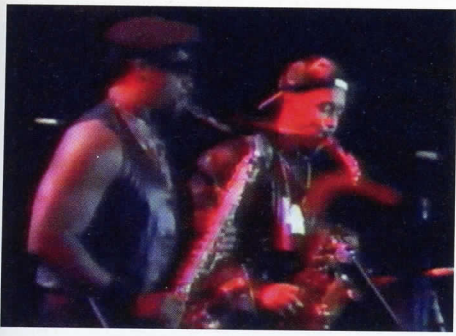
"Rotterdam in the '80s. Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's love affair with Europe is famous, with special dedication usually accorded to Sweden, Italy, and Spain. But I think they've always loved the Netherlands, too, from their first visit to Amsterdam in 1975—and the Dutch fans sure love them. Bruce and the E Street Band played Holland six times throughout the decade—twice in '81, twice in '85, and twice in '88—every one of them in Rotterdam. Every one was special. I was lucky enough to be there all six nights, and looking back at these images reminds me just what a presence Clarence Clemons was, and what a cut-up: a constant foil, always game for any shtick, but always a solid rock to lean on, too." —R.V.D.

photographs by
**RENÉ
VAN
DIEMEN**

REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

June 12, 1984, was one of those rare hot summer evenings in New Jersey, the kind where the air is so thick and sweltering you think you can't breathe. Outside the Stone Pony in Asbury Park, the temperature was grazing 100 degrees. Inside it was even hotter, thanks to the crush of bodies packing the club, sweaty and busting with anticipation. Bruce and the entire E Street Band would be performing a warm-up show in preparation for the Born in the U.S.A. tour, a major turning point in their already illustrious career. I was firmly rooted left center of the Pony stage, approximately where the Big Man was typically positioned, gleaming brass saxophone in hand. If I close my eyes, I swear I can still hear Clarence's sax filling the room that night like never before: full throttle, blowing *loud* straight into my wide-angle Nikon lens. I'm not sure I ever took my finger off of the shutter that night. Dressed in casual summer clothes, Clarence was dripping bullets like the rest of the E Street Band and the entire audience including me. He never missed a note. —J.S.





REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS BRANFORD MARSALIS

After the passing of Clarence “Big Man” Clemons, Ethan [Iverson’s] offer for me to write something on the Big Man allowed me to dig out my Springsteen CDs along with some other things Mr. Clemons had performed on.

Listening to the music brought me back to my youth, but in addition, reminded me of something I had learned as a teenager, before I ever considered becoming a jazz musician: if you can play something that compliments the song, it will have a lasting impression.

I have spent a lot of years resisting the allure of “playing the changes” at the expense of playing the song, and hearing Clarence again reminded me where I subconsciously acquired that instinct. As a student of those solos, the Big Man is right up there with King Curtis, New Orleans tenormen Herb Hardesty and Lee Allen, “Fathead” Newman, Boots Randolph (to whom Clarence pays homage in virtually every solo), David Sanborn, Phil Woods and Dick Parry. In terms of saxophone playing, the Big Man is certainly closer to Randolph than Sanborn or Curtis (and not as bad as Parry)... but what they all have in common is simply this: their solos leave indelible imprints on the songs they played on. One cannot imagine another musician taking their place.

If you know anything about Springsteen’s music, you know it is a reflection of his personal beliefs. It is hard, unrelenting, and honest. At times, those values can be very difficult to find in finer players: The ease with which the “shredders” play often has an effect of them being above the song, or worse, not even aware of the song’s existence. Clarence’s lack of saxophone prowess meant that he would have to get there with attitude, sound (which was massive!) and conviction. Thus, a musical marriage was made.

Many times, saxophone solos complimented the seemingly compulsory eight-bar break from the singing, as had been mandated since Tin Pan Alley days. When you listen to the Big Man playing on “I’m Goin’ Down,” “Badlands,” or the early “Born to Run,” his solos lift the song up, taking them to the next level, a level which the Boss gladly matches. And believe me, hearing it live was even more intense!

When I was playing with Sting in the mid-to-late-’80s, we embarked on a massive tour in support of Amnesty International. On the second tour, Mr. Springsteen and band joined. I



Buenos Aires, Argentina, October 15, 1988.

**OTHER THAN MY QUARTET,
I HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED
THAT KIND OF INTENSITY
ON STAGE; NO MATTER
HOW HARD I PLAYED, IT
WAS NOT HARD ENOUGH.**

had been critical of Clarence before then, because, as a young musician, I focused on facility and “hipness,” as opposed to the power of musical intent. On that tour, I learned a lot about Bruce, and how much music he knows. I hung a lot with Nils Lofgren and Danny Federici, and learned that Garry Tallent was in that long line of super-important-yet-ignored bassists in pop music. And to top it off, I was invited to play a set with the band.

Other than with my quartet, I have not experienced that kind of intensity onstage; no matter how hard I played, it was not hard enough. And I did that gig only for an hour. When it was over, my lips felt like they usually do when I play a gig after not touching the horn for two weeks. To add to the perspective, at that time, Bruce and the boys (and gal) played like that for about four hours every night. Clarence



was very gracious to me, and he brought it. Everything I played had to have his vibe on it, so powerful was his influence on the sound of the band, and the sound on him.

Whether playing with the E Street Band, or wailing on Aretha’s “Freeway of Love” (thanks to producer Narada Michael Walden, another Clarence believer), the Big Man was one of a kind, and Bruce will have a hard, if not impossible time, replacing him. The best way to close is with Mr. Springsteen, from his recording of “Rosalita (Come Out Tonight),” from the box set *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Live/1975-’85*: “... and last, but not least, do I have to say his name?” No sir, you do not. 🎸

This piece originally ran on Ethan Iverson’s blog, Do the Math [dothemath.typepad.com]. Reprinted here with permission of Iverson and Marsalis.



REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

DALE MAHARIDGE & MICHAEL WILLIAMSON

Michael S. Williamson took these two photographs of Clarence Clemons with Bruce Springsteen on the 2009 tour, at 1st Mariner Arena in Baltimore, on November 20, 2009. It was the second-to-last time that Bruce played with Clarence and the E Street Band on a major tour. The one with both men on an instrument was taken during the middle of the show. The hug was of course after the “Big Man” (“Do I have to say his name!”) salute Bruce always did near the end of each show. It’s a semi-uncommon photo in that news photographers are allowed to shoot three songs per most arena’s rules, and then they must leave. Photographers were not always present to catch this moment.

A good friend, Bob Webster, said of these images: “I’ve been following Michael’s photos in the (Washington) *Post* for so long now and can always spot them by looking at the hands. I’ve seen countless Springsteen pictures, and these are among the best. Just look at the hands.”

I never thought about it, but Michael does capture something with hands in his photographs. There is an intimacy in his pictures, and hands are part of that closeness. Like me, Michael knows Bruce a whole lot better than either of us knew Clarence. But in all the years Michael photographed Bruce and the E Street Band, he “got” Clarence. Michael, who ran track in high school to the music of Bruce and the band, sent me this email that explains why:

My first major Bruce Springsteen experience was hearing “Born to Run” on the car radio of my 1971 Datsun station wagon where I sometimes slept when traveling... and I ran out and bought the album 15 minutes after hearing the song.... I didn’t know much about the band, but I knew right away that Clarence Clemons was obviously special, because he’s featured on that wonderful black-and-white photograph on the album cover.

I was just a kid, but after hearing the sax solo in “Jungleland,” I understood immediately what the word *soul* meant... the sound is big but elegantly bombastic, an amazing combination of heat and heart.

In later years, I’d get a chance to go backstage before or after concerts. While Bruce is The Man, Clarence was The Big Man. Bruce didn’t act like a rock star—no groupies, no big entourage, no excesses of drink and loudness—whereas the Big Man was the reminder that this was, after all, rock ‘n’ roll! Clarence’s love of “the life” was appropriate for the territory. He had a totally different crowd, and that was good—it made you realize that while the band was a cohesive, tight, unified team, it was made up of very individual individuals.

It was always touching to see Bruce hug the Big Man as he did at the close of a show. Bruce couldn’t get his arms all the way around him because, well, he was so big. But what Bruce was really doing was saying in Clarence Clemons’ ear, “Good show tonight, brother,” or something to that effect. He said it every time because Bruce knows as much as anyone that any concert could be your last. That’s why he’s Bruce: because he never takes us or his mates for granted.

For me, in all the times I was backstage at the big shows, Clarence was always off in his dressing room or just passing through. One time, however, back in late 1995, I did get a chance to really talk with him. Bruce was doing an early gig on his *Ghost of Tom Joad* tour, and he was in Berkeley. I drove up from Stanford University where I was teaching.

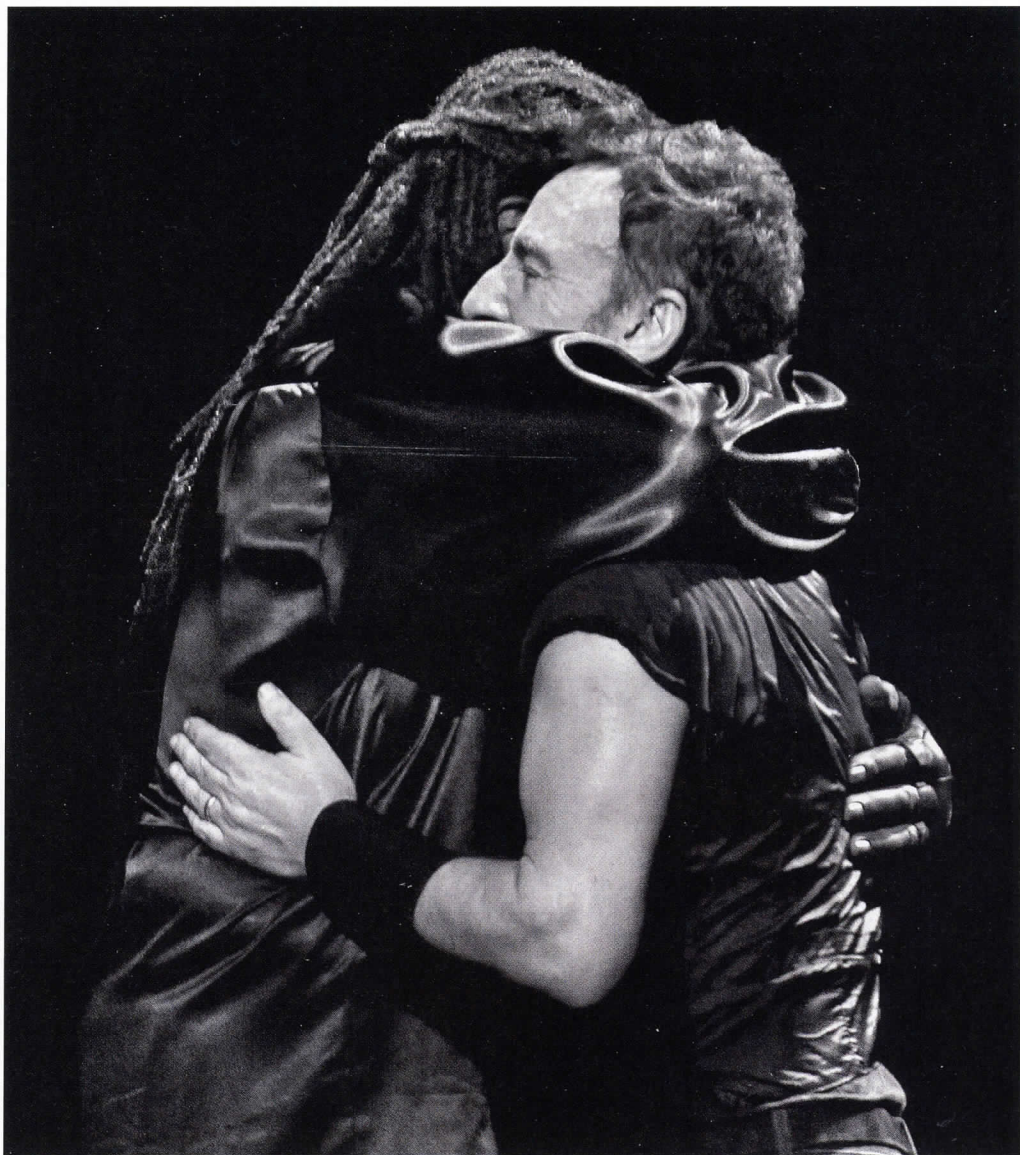
It was after the show. A team from *60 Minutes* was filming Bruce. Clarence and I, along with a small woman seated on his lap, were waiting for Bruce. Bruce saw both of us, shouted “It’s the C-man!” and then my name. Then he vanished into his dressing room to

be filmed. “Catch you later, Bruce,” Clarence said before Bruce closed the door. We talked for a while, mostly about our book, *Journey to Nowhere*, which inspired Bruce to write two songs on *Ghost*.

It was a pleasant conversation, and Clarence was into hearing my stories about riding freight trains. Clarence was about to head off to Japan for a solo show. He seemed like a nice guy. Then Bruce stuck his head out and yelled, “Maharidge, get in here and get some publicity for the book!” Of course, Bruce mispronounced my name, “Ma-hair-ridge” (it is Ma-HAR-ridge), but I have never corrected him. I liked Clarence and damn it, we never really talked again beyond a hello or two.

All the while Clarence and I chatted, that woman had her tongue in Clarence’s ear as she vied for his attention. He acted like he was just with me, with no woman on his lap. I thought, “Hey, it’s rock ‘n’ roll.” 🐸

—By Dale Maharidge with photographs by Michael S. Williamson, Pulitzer Prize-winning authors of *Journey to Nowhere and Someplace Like America, among others*



JO LOPEZ

Interview by CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS

Springsteen fans may know Jo Lopez best as Bruce's primary tour photographer in recent years. Jo has been shooting live music since he was a teenager (his first, Black Oak Arkansas: "Yeah, it was because of Jim Dandy!"), and his live photographs have graced bruce springsteen.net frequently as well as the *London Calling* DVD package and the cover of *Rolling Stone*. But Lopez's entry to the Springsteen world came as a roadie—as friend and saxophone tech to Clarence Clemons, a role that only later opened the door for his photography. Jo continues to spend a lot of time on the road, not only for the Wrecking Ball tour but also teching for Buffalo Springfield, The Doors, and the Silver Bullet Band's sax man Alto Reed. But nothing compares to his friendship with the Big Man, and the extended family he found on E Street: "These guys have been my family for years and I love them all. The crew, and the band... they're always going to have a really, really amazing place in my heart until the day I'm old and dead, you know? And Clarence... he's like an angel on our shoulders."

What was it like working for Clarence?

Well, I've worked with a lot of people, but the thing with Clarence was more like a spiritual task. We were both very spiritual people, and we always connected that way. I always looked up to him, and it was always... I don't know, it was always like I had his back. When

you work for an artist you watch their back on stage, but there was something about Clarence where I wanted to have his back always, tenfold. And because he was also a neighbor who lived down the street, I was there for him every day. No matter what he asked for, I had his back. You know, not only was he my guy on the tour, but back at home we always did get-togethers. So it was more like a family, a family/spiritual thing with us.

How did you two meet?

Years ago—like, 15 or 20 years ago—Clarence had just moved down to South Florida; Billy Livesay, who wound up being his guitar player for the Temple of Soul, and Darlene DeLano, who became his manager, they were good friends of mine. Darlene started doing business with him, and he was going to get this band together. At that point I was teching for Billy, helping Billy on the guitars, but they also had a discussion about me teching for [saxophonist] Mark Rivera back during the Foreigner days—so they learned I used to do horns for Mark.

Back then, the Temple of Soul was called the Band of Faith. It just started building, and then I became the regular guy, and then we started developing this relationship. At first it was just like an employer/tech relationship, but as the years passed by with the Band of Faith and the Temple of Soul, it became a lot deeper than that. We had a circle of friends all intertwined

with Clarence. It was a tight circle—Darlene DeLano, Billy Livesay, his band—it was always a close, tight-knit thing. And that's how we started.

So no matter what he was doing, whether it was E Street or Temple of Soul or anything else, you were his guy?

I was his guy. From the beginning of the Band of Faith and Temple of Soul, all the way until the last shows that we did—all the way up to the Lady Gaga thing at the tail end. I was doing New York runs with him, repairing all the horns, just getting him ready for Lady Gaga.

How many horns did he have?

We had a lot of horns. I would always keep out three tenors and two baritones. We had a soprano, and we had an alto, but we never kept those out; we kept those standing by in case Bruce—you know, if there was something different that he wanted to do. But the main horns that I had stage right were the Keilwerth tenors and the baritones. At first they were Yamaha baris, but then I got him some beautiful Keilwerth baritones that were just gorgeous. It was basically those two horns. And flutes, of course. And then in the last few years I had a harmonica for him for... I think it was for "Outlaw Pete" [laughs] which went out the window!

We know the history of Bruce's Esquire—obviously that thing goes way back, and it's an icon—but did Clarence have a particular horn that he'd had forever? What's the sax that's on the cover of *Born to Run*, do you know?

That's a Selmer, but I'm not really sure which one it is. So yeah, he has his old Selmers. When you walk into his house he has so many horns tucked away, put away safely, so many horns. I believe during the Rising tour he had the Selmer out, I think we had an alto that was a Selmer, but everything after that was all Keilwerth, and we started leaving the Selmers home. I got Keilwerth to send out some really nice horns, some baritones and whatnot, so we started retiring all of the old ones. All the old, original horns that he had were all tucked away in his house, we kind of left them there and never brought them back out.

Did you deal with his percussion, too?

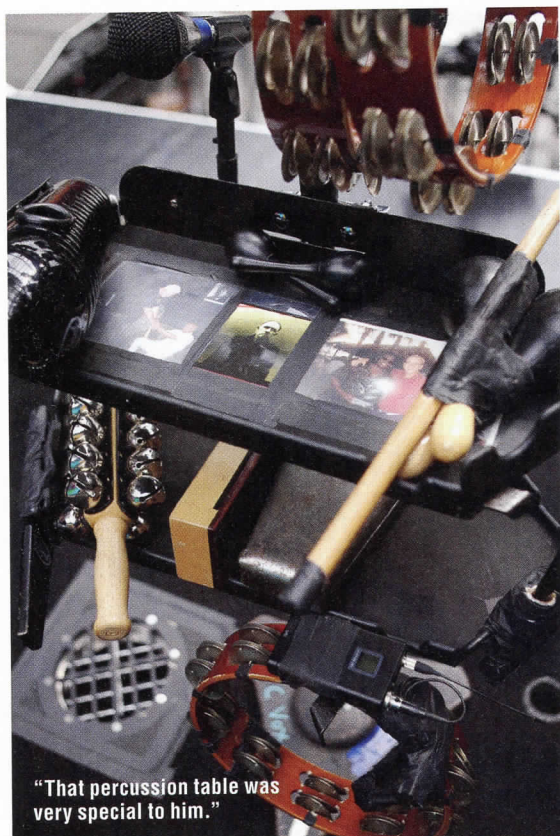
Yeah, I did all the percussion. I built his world. He had his two tables which I put in front of him, with his shakers and tambourines and those sleigh bells. His percussion



PHOTO COURTESY OF JO LOPEZ



Photograph by
JO LOPEZ



"That percussion table was very special to him."



Clarence's throne: "something magnificent... like for a king, the king that you are!"

I remember the first time I saw it, I thought it was so perfect, it made me laugh out loud.

It was amazing [laughs]. And then for his horns on stage, we built him a customized horn stand that goes into the ground. That way he could just lean on the horns—they weren't on loose stands. Everything was tight, everything was there for him and

ready for him to just grab and rock.

During the Rising tour I kept his horns on a regular, three-legged horn stand. Standard. I'd put a sandbag on the bottom and dress it up with material. Then towards the Magic and

Working on a Dream tours I was like, we need to tighten this up a bit—I wanted him to be able to lean on something. Why don't we just build a stand? I got together with the carpenter a week ahead, and between us we went ahead and we created it. So then he could just play the horn where it was, he wouldn't have to take it off the stand — [the horn stand] went right into the ground.

Into the stage?

Right into the stage. It snapped right in. And it was wonderful, he loved it. After the show, it just popped right out. It was quite the system — and he was happy. That's the main thing.

world was quite interesting, because he also had photos of people he loved on his table. We had photos of Terry Magovern on it, and Dick Moroso—another good friend of [Clarence's], he owned the Moroso [Motorsports Park], very famous in the world of racing. Dick Moroso was his buddy, they used to go fishing together all the time. And then Danny Federici went up after Danny passed away.

I remember doing "Bobby Jean," at the beginning of "Bobby Jean," Clarence would always close his eyes and reach down and touch the table for a couple of seconds—put his hands on his friends and kind of take a moment of meditation. You know, he'd give out some love before the beginning of the song; again, going back to his spirituality. It was just a very deep moment of Clarence reaching out to people he loved. So I took care of all of that—and obviously, that percussion table was very special to him.

I also wanted to ask about his throne. When it became clear that Clarence needed to rest his body on stage, for a while he just had a little stool to sit on; at what point did the throne come in, and whose idea was it?

I think the idea for the throne was a combination of Bruce and Clarence. At first we gave him the stool, the blue stool—which [laughs] was a very comfortable stool!—but after that we wanted to dress up the stage a bit. So Bruce and Clarence got together, it was three of us in a pow-wow about it, and they were like, "Let's make something magnificent... like for a king, the king that you are!" And then we created it: we created this golden throne for him, which became this beautiful part of the stage.



Seat of power: Clarence and his throne on the Magic tour, San Jose, CA, April 5, 2008.

Needing that sturdiness on stage... I think some fans may not have realized how much pain Clarence was in for a long time. People chuckled about him sitting down during a show, but it wasn't a matter of being lazy or even tired. On the Rising tour, it wasn't until I had a seat around behind the stage, behind Danny, that I saw Clarence going up and down those stairs on the side of the stage. He had to side-step, and he needed help just to move up those few steps, and it made me realize: he's got to be in constant pain.

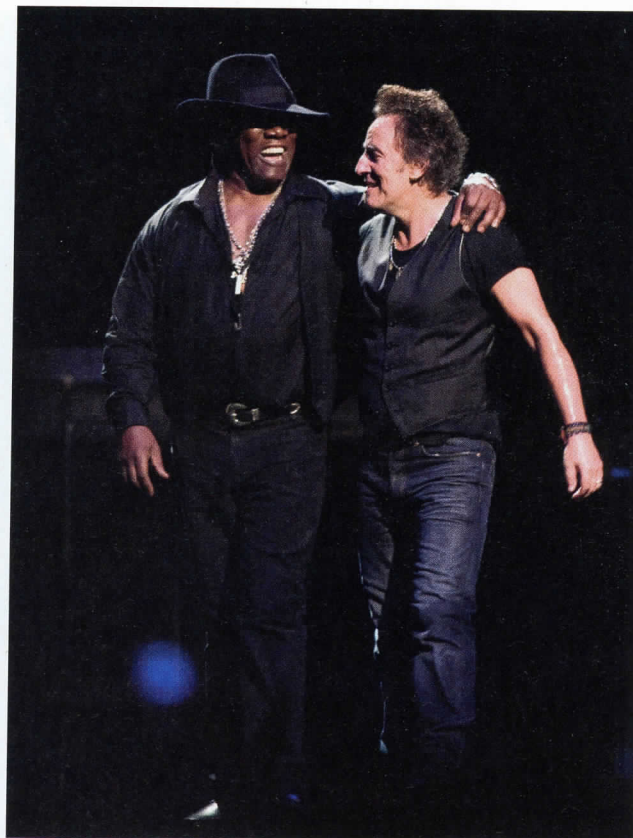
Yes, both his hips and his knees, they were really hurting. But I gotta tell you, man, as soon as the music started, he put all that behind him. The guy was a friggin' trouper. All that stuff, he just forgot about it—the music was like magic. For him, it was healing. It was insane, the cat wouldn't even act like there was pain. But he was hurting. Again, I did whatever I could to make things easy for him.

The production guys got the elevators toward the tail end. It was wonderful, because the rest of the band would come up through the center stairs, and then I would bring up Clarence on the side and Bruce would come up with him. They would come up as the brothers that they are, come up together from stage right, and it was such a beautiful entrance. And then Bruce would take the elevator down with Clarence [laughs], which was great.

They're just looking at each other, not even saying anything, but they were basically telling each other, "Hey, man, I love you, and thank you for being here." They had this love for each other which was just beautiful.

You mentioned Clarence's spirituality, which is something that's always been very interesting to me, that he was a follower of Sri Chinmoy. I recently talked with Narada Michael Walden a little bit about that, and the last time I talked to Clarence what he told me was that he was no longer exactly on that path—that now he was just trying to be a good soul. What do you know or what can you tell me about that path and where Clarence's spirituality took him?

It's funny, because toward the last year of his life I noticed that his energy shifted. Obviously his energy was



BRUCE AND CLARENCE... IT WAS LIKE THEIR BRAINS WERE CONNECTED WIRELESSLY. THEY UNDERSTOOD EACH OTHER ON STAGE, IT WAS AUTOMATIC FOR THEM. AND THERE WAS A LOT OF LOVE.

The Clarence-Bruce relationship is something that's become legend over time. Bruce even talked at his eulogy about the mysterious bond that they have; it's obviously one that's very real and goes back a very long way. What did you see in their relationship?

I see a lot of artists who have to communicate verbally. They have to talk about things. But it was always this thing with Bruce and Clarence where the words wouldn't even come out, but they knew: he knew what Bruce was thinking. They had a thing, these two guys, it was like their brains were connected wirelessly. They understood each other on stage, it was automatic for them.

And there was a lot of love. At the eulogy I was looking at Bruce's eyes, and man, he was in pain. God, he was so torn up. They just had this thing: it was love, it was family, it was deeper than brothers. It was tight. It's kind of... it's one of those things where you just can't find the right words for it, because it's really deep. I wish I could find the right words for it.

Despite all the E Street mythologizing that goes on, it's always good to think, particularly with Bruce and Clarence, that it was never just a show. That it was a deep bond.

A major, major deep bond. I've seen it a million times. I have this beautiful photo of Bruce and Clarence walking off the stage, and they were just holding each other in their arms.

always good, but it shifted to a higher level. I'm sorry it's hard to describe.... but it was a very good path. The guy was almost like a shaman, you know what I mean? He was kind to everybody. I've never seen him get nasty with anybody—he was always kind and compassionate.

When I met him, when I started working with him, he wasn't that deep. I mean, he was always kind, he was always humble, but I think in the last 15 years he got more in tune with himself spiritually. And then it became deeper and deeper. Personally, I think the cat was totally in tune with the spiritual world. I know he was.

You know, I have a lot of dreams about Clarence. As I'll tell Darlene: "I got a visit from Clarence last night" [laughs]. He was spiritually very powerful, and he has his ways of reaching out to us, he has his ways of reaching out to everybody.

Can you tell me about his dressing room, the Temple of Soul?

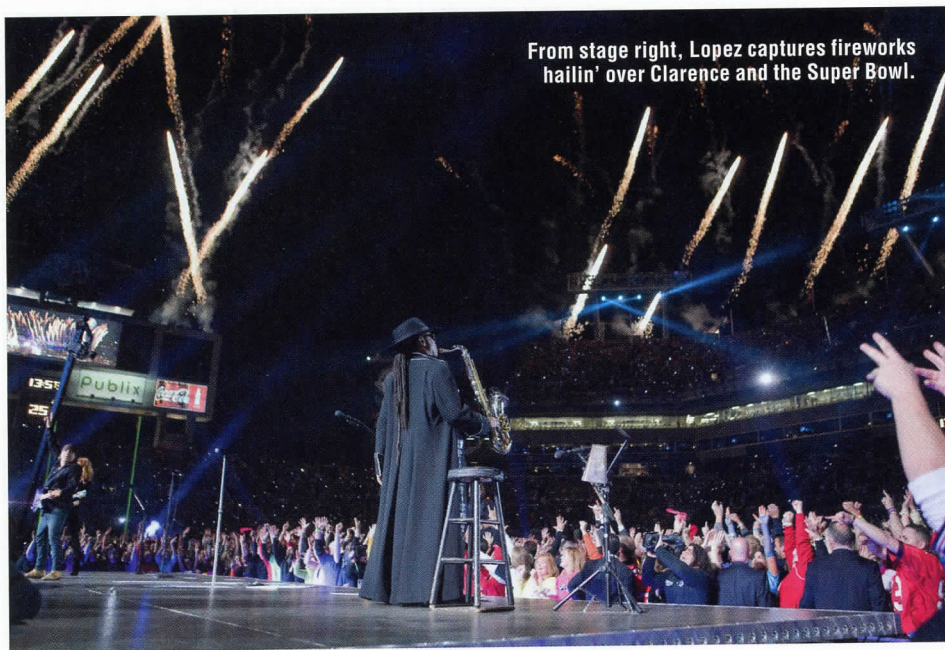
When you walked in there, the room was so peaceful, and the lights dim... it was just amazing. Clarence would have his photos, like the famous photo of him with his eyes closed, and then they would dress it up with candles and pictures of his guru, his children... it was actually a temple. There would be incense, and candles. And music, always, whether it be Ravi Shankar—soft, beautiful music—or Motown

or James Brown or something like that. It was called the Temple of Soul because the cat had a lot of soul.

I used to tell Clarence, "You gotta get ready for the show." And then I'd do my thing on stage with the guys, and once in a while I'd stick my head back in there and go, "Hey, baby, how ya doin'?" and he'd go, "Ah, I'm doin' good, babe... doin' good." Right before the show, I would go in there and put his ears on—you know, for his ears, his monitors, his pack and his belt—and I used to tell him, "Man, you know what, I feel like Mickey gettin' Rocky ready for the fight." And then he would start laughing his ass off. And then they'd go on stage, and after the encore, I'd go, "Go get 'em, Rocky! Go get 'em!" and he'd start laughing.

But that room, really, it was the meditation room. It was the place where he just sat quietly, and then he'd play his horn, and he'd get himself ready for the show, and it was perfect. He would sit there quietly and close his eyes and meditate, and we would give him the space to let him do his thing. And then he was ready to kill the room. He was the king, and he was ready to get out there in front of his kingdom, which was the stadiums and the arenas with his brothers.

His kingdom—you say you never saw him be anything but kind to people, and I'll say that we heard from so many people after he



From stage right, Lopez captures fireworks hailin' over Clarence and the Super Bowl.

died, and everybody seemed to have their own story about Clarence's kindness—people who met him after a show and he insisted on signing things for them, or giving them tickets. Did you see a lot of interaction between Clarence and fans?

Oh, yeah. Clarence would call me up on stage when the lights were low, and he'd go, "J-Lo, you see the people in the front? You see the little kid that's with them? Do me a favor, grab two maracas and bring them down to that kid." He loved children. And then he was always like, "Those people, they look like they need water, give them some water... J-Lo, do me a favor, get earplugs for that wife and the husband, they need earplugs."

So he always wanted to make sure everybody was in a good place, and he was always looking at the audience. Somebody would wave at him, and he would wave right back. He didn't just look into the audience and everything would disappear, he would look into the audience and look into their eyes and smile at them, and give love. He loved all these fans. He loved them all. He had a huge posse right there in the front, they would just yell, "Clarence!" And it got so loud sometimes that you could hear it over the crowd.

He was the Big Man. He was just the Big Man [laughs]... every show, the fans would go friggin' nuts over this guy, it was just hilarious.

"Jungleland" was always one of those moments, when the reverence really came out. But somebody told me that Clarence didn't actually like playing the "Jungleland" solo—it was too long, too much pressure or something. Is that true?

Funny you say that, I gotta tell you... he used to go, "[Groans]... J-Lo, all right, baby..." I'll never forget how he'd sit on his throne right before he was going up for "Jungleland," and he'd always reach his hand out. I would just reach up and hold his hand for a second and say, "Hey, man, it's cool." And then I'd say, "All

right, go get 'em!" He always nailed it, though. It was amazing. He always nailed that song.

Was it pressure? Is that what it was?

I don't know, I really don't. It was just like this funny thing in his brain. But he always hit the notes. It was his real time to shine. And then he'd walk back over stage right, he'd reach down and I'd hold his hand again for a second and I'd be like, "You killed it, it was great!"

So what did he like to perform?

Oh, what was that song? "Ties That Bind"? No, not "Ties"... it's a very powerful song that Bruce used to put on for Clarence, with the horns and the guitar, with the drum at the beginning (*imitates the sound*)... what the hell is the name of the song?

"Night"?

Yeah, yeah. Exactly. Man, what an opening for the show.

Yes! Absolutely. It's funny you mention that, I was at the first show when they broke that song out as the opener on the Reunion tour, and it just floored me. I didn't know that was a thing for Clarence.

Yeah, it was an insane opener—Clarence and Bruce and and Max and everybody, man... it was such a powerful beginning, and that would light a fire under Clarence's ass. It would get the crew going, too. When we heard that song at the start, we were like, "Man, we're gonna rock this friggin' place!" My vote was, start every show with that song. That's my vote.

At one point, Clarence tried playing bagpipes in rehearsals. Were you there for that?

Oh, yeah. The bagpipes were during the Rising tour, we tried that at Convention Hall in Asbury Park where they rehearsed. We gave it a shot—he would do the bagpipes in the back room and we said, let's try them in the beginning of the song.

"Into the Fire"?

I think so, right. But it just did not work. They put microphones around it, and so every time Clarence turned around, the bagpipes would hit the stands, and they were falling all over the place [laughs]. And Bruce goes, "All right! That's it! This isn't going to happen ever again."

It's a great idea, though.

It was a great idea, it was really nice, we envisioned this beautiful bagpipe opening... but it just wasn't happening.

It is amazing how many instruments he tried his hand at. You mentioned the flute, and I was going to say penny whistle in "American Land."

The famous penny whistle! It's funny, when the penny whistle wasn't working, he would break it in half—he'd be like, "Okay, that isn't working..." *Crack!* I have a bunch of penny whistles in my case, and a bunch in there that are broken in half. Clarence would look at me and go, "This thing sucks," snap it in half, and throw it at me [laughs]. I'd have to run and get him another one.

Like a drummer breaking a stick. How tough is it to find a penny whistle on short notice?

Not tough, but there were some keys that they didn't have in stock and you would have to order—there were different tunings for different songs that I had to really, really try to find. When I did find it, I bought more than one, trust me. I'd be like, "Let me have ten of those."

Because he's going to break five of them.

Right. So I have a little museum of penny whistles.



A rare shot of C on bagpipes.

What can you tell me about the collaboration with Lady Gaga? I think it was one of those things that threw some Springsteen fans—in some ways those are really disparate worlds. Or they can seem to be. But it also seemed like a very genuine connection that they had. I thought she handled herself so well when Clarence got sick.

Yeah, she did. She really dug him. She really fell in love with him, music-wise. They were in the studio together, and he did his thing, and she really looked up to him. He was sort of like a mentor—she really loved him.

I remember getting the call for that, and he was really excited about it. He did the music video, of course—besides recording with her, he did *American Idol*, he did the music video. He was quite excited about that; he was like, “Hey J-Lo, hey baby, you know, we’ll probably go on tour with Lady Gaga!” I was like, “Great!” He says, “This is what we need to do, baby, I want you to come to my house and I want you to grab these horns, take ‘em to New York City, get ‘em worked on.” And I’m like, “All right!”

He was very excited about it. We were in the studio, we were in Echo Beach Studio in Jupiter [Florida], and he showed me photos: “Look at this, me and Lady Gaga on the telephone!” At the time things were a little quiet on the Bruce side, and he was like, “Something’s gonna happen, it’s gonna be good, we’re gonna hit the road and make some music with Lady Gaga.”

That was the last time I was in the studio with Clarence. That was the last photo shoot

we did. After that I went to his house, and that was the last time I saw him. That was it.

It seemed to happen so fast.

It was like a freight train. It happened really, really fast. I was out with Neil Young—with Buffalo Springfield, Neil Young and Stephen Stills—and meanwhile I talked to Clarence on the phone. He was still talking about the Lady Gaga thing, and I still have the messages. I saved the messages. He called me up every day, like, “J-Lo-Lo-Lo-Lo-Lo-Lopezzzzz... hey, baby, this is the Big Man talkin’ at you... where are you, man? Give me a call!” Reaching out every day, every day. I’m like, “Clarence, I’m gonna be home in a couple of days, bear with me here!”

So we do our last show with Neil, and I’m really tired, and I’m just going to go home and shut my phone off. To forget about life for a day or two, just relax. So I go home, and I was so comfortable in my king-sized bed, and my phone is in the living room downstairs, and I forgot to put it in vibrate mode, so the phone is ringing all day. It’s ringing and ringing, and I’m going, “Oh, man, this is insane.”

Then finally, 10:00 at night, I must have had 35 missed calls or something, and I pick up: It’s Steve Argy, Clarence’s bass player from the Temple of Soul, and he goes, “Hey, you hear about Clarence?” And I’m like, “No, what do you mean? I just spoke to him yesterday. What’s going on?” He goes, “Dude, he had a stroke. He’s in the hospital.”

I called Darlene right away, and we got in the car and we just bee-lined it for the hospital in West Palm Beach. From that point on it was pretty much every day at the hospital. Every day, 16 hours a day. Bruce came down, Bruce was there... the kids... it was just tight, just a close, close family thing.

And you know, we really thought he was going to pull through. The energy—we were there giving him some really beautiful energy, and the doctor was giving us updates, which were positive: “It looks good, he’s strong...” I mean, the guy was strong. He was a major fighter. And we were there every day for him.

My impression is that they were really optimistic, that he was more responsive than someone in that position would normally be, squeezing your hand...

Absolutely, he sure was. I mean, the doctors did talk worst-case scenarios, and they’d follow up good news with “don’t get too excited because he could turn for the worse,” but we were in a sense going, “Okay, so he’s going to pull through. He might need a wheelchair or something, whatever... but Clarence is going to pull through.”

And then later on that night I got the call. I wasn’t there, but George Travis called me and he goes, “Well, Joe, this is George, just wanted to let you know that Clarence has moved on.” I still have that message, “He’s moved on.” It was just... he just left. He was gone. It was hard. It was really, really hard. I happened to be



Outside and inside Clarence's Temple of Soul.



with Billy [Livesay], and we all broke down. Even today it's hard to believe that he's gone. That week was really a crazy week. We really thought he was going to pull through, you know? We really did.

So then we started prepping for the funeral, and I'm like, "Clarence, I'm sitting here in a suit and tie because of you, I hope you appreciate this" [laughs]. It was myself, Chainsaw [guitar tech Ricky LaPointe], Shawn Magovern, and Kevin Buell wearing suits and ties. A bunch of roadies in suits and ties. It was like, "Really, Clarence? Seriously?"

What was that service like for you?

It was really beautiful. First of all, it gave myself and Chainsaw and Shawn and Kevin some time to ourselves as guys who tour with the cats—and George Travis, of course—it gave us some time to ourselves, because we spent that whole morning and the day before prepping. We got there early to prep the church, to dress the church, you know, to put the horn in it, put in the bagpipes, Clarence's photos, and I brought in a Buddha...

So you were still doing roadie work!

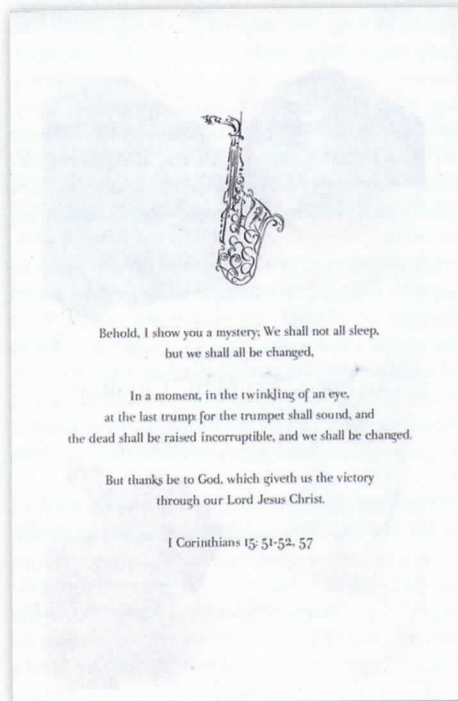
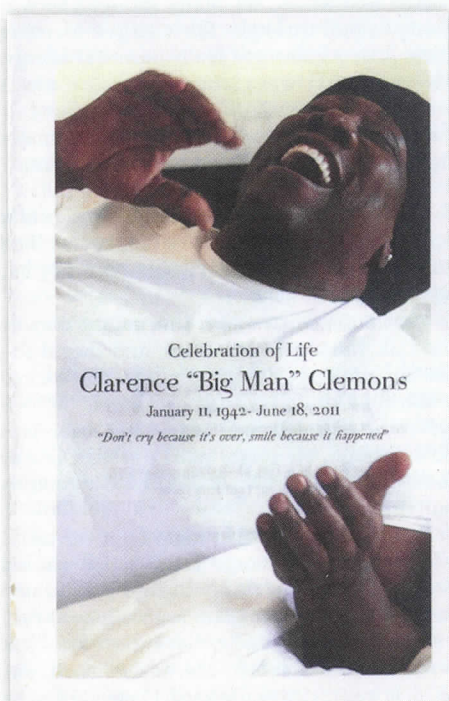
Oh, yeah! I said to Chainsaw, "Look at us, I feel like I'm still working for Clarence. Who do I invoice here?" [laughs] It felt like we were doing a gig. But by spending those couple of hours, and getting the church together, it was really good for all of us. It gave us a chance to release some of this grief.

Of course there was a lot of media out there, but inside it was just family and friends—it was the circle. And Bruce's words... I don't think there was a dry eye in that place. The words were so perfect and so beautiful. Everyone who spoke—it was really a beautiful day, celebrating Clarence's life. It's a day I'm never going to forget. It was almost like you didn't even feel like he passed away: you felt like he was going to be walking in the room any second. Like Bruce said, Clarence is "too big to die."

Now... I have too many memories in my house. I have his hat—he gave me his hat—and all the beautiful photos I've taken throughout the years. Just a lot of memories. But I have my Buddha, and I have my photos around my Buddha of people that I've lost, I have Clarence's, I have Lenny's photos, Danny's photos, family. So I light my incense and I say my words, I reach out to them and I wish them a good day. You know, I have my thing.

And some great memories.

Some amazing memories. We had a lot of great times. I'll tell you, there were times when we had some laughs, where he was rolling.



Jo Lopez captured the heartwarming photograph used for the memorial service program (left) on Clarence and Victoria's wedding day in California: "At the hotel room I took a bunch of photos of him getting dressed for the wedding," says Jo, "lying on the bed and laughing and this and that... this was actually one of my favorite photos of him. When I saw it in the program I was laughing—I was like, 'Man, I love that shot.'"

What comes to mind?

Well, he used to throw me his hat, and I'd have to throw it back. Or I'd have to throw him something else—and I was known as the world's worst thrower. When they used to put "Two Hearts" on the setlist I used to go, "Oh, Jesus... oh, boy..." because he had this thing where he would high-five Nils, and right when he's about to high-five Nils, he'd throw me the tambourine off of stage right. And then he turns around and he high-fives Nils, and when he turns back around the tambourine has to obviously fly back to him.

For some reason, I could never throw that damn tambourine.

One time he throws me the tambourine and I got myself all ready, I got the tambourine in my hand, I got the wind-up and the pitch, and I threw the tambourine... straight up. Instead of going to Clarence it went straight up, like 20 feet in the air! I don't know what happened. And then I had to try and catch it coming back down. And Clarence is looking at me going, "What the hell?"

So another time, I think we were in Dublin, he threw me his hat, and then he did a solo, then he says, "Throw me the hat back!" So I threw the hat—and it landed right on his freakin' head. The hat landed right on his head! Troy Milner and Mimi, who does lighting, they were my witnesses to that, and Clarence was laughing and looking at me like, "I can't believe that just happened—that will never, ever happen again!"

And then when Bruce would get on the piano and the lights would go down, when Bruce would do his thing and the band would take a break, Clarence would walk behind a riser, he would sit there, and I would get him a cold Heineken. And we would just talk about home.

He'd go, "J-Lo... hey, baby... so I'm thinking about going down to the Keys, maybe doin' some fishin' this week, you know?... We should go fishin'."

He would sit there for a couple of minutes and drink his cold Heineken and just kind of look around. He'd take in the energy in the room. He always had that smile on his face. It was almost like he was in heaven.

It's funny, because that's kind of how I envision him now, being in heaven. Seeing him on that stage and that riser, just kind of looking at his audience with a smile, looking at Bruce and the boys, and the crew... he loved the crew, and the crew loved him. And that's the way I envision him now, just having that big smile on, very peaceful and feeling good, you know what I mean?

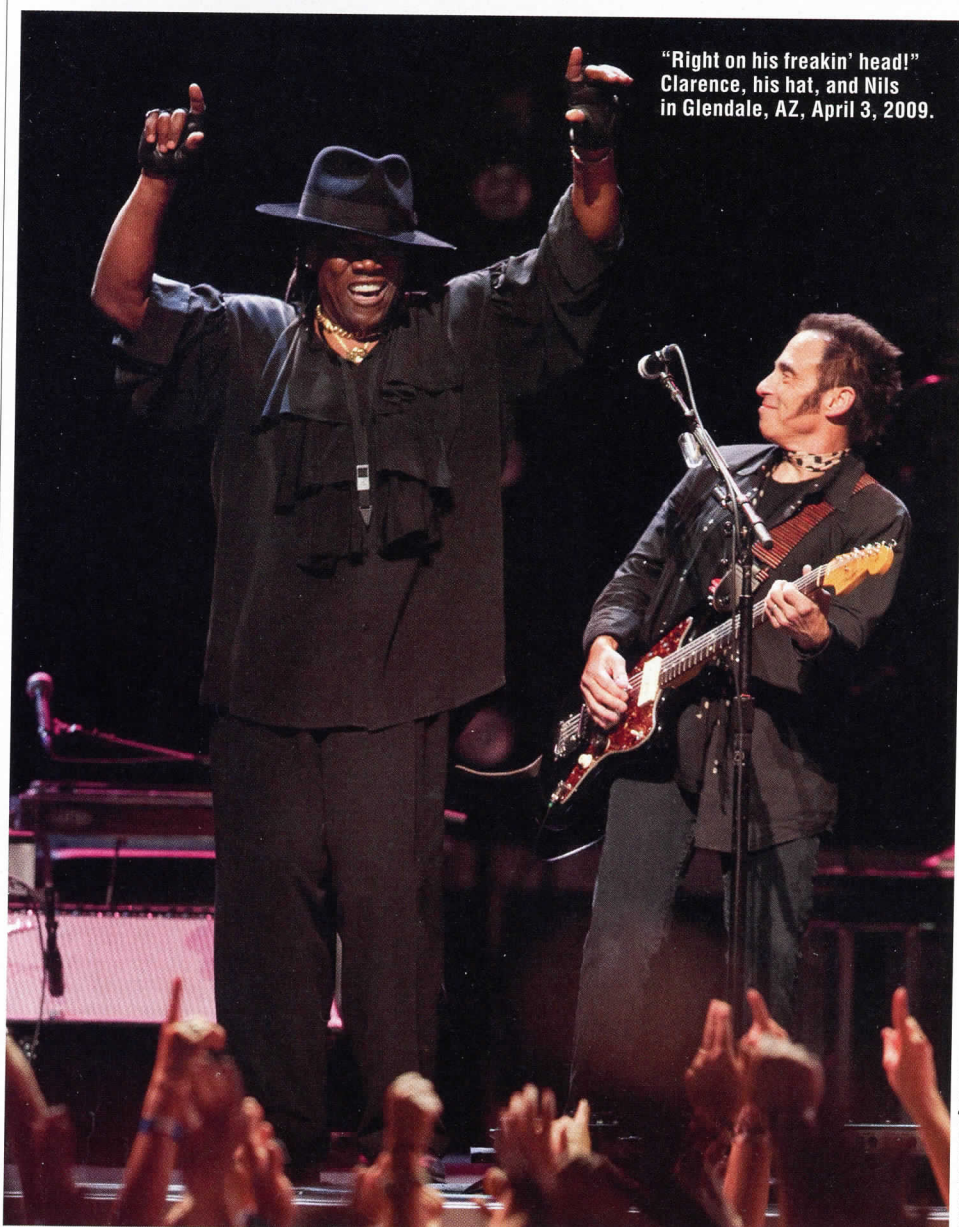
I do. That sounds like him.

Absolutely. And you know what? Clarence's spirit... he still lives on. His soul is in every one of those arenas and every one of those stadiums. He's definitely there on stage with everybody, in the music, they feel his presence. I'll tell you this right now, he's definitely watching over the guys. He's somewhere there floating around [laughs]. They definitely feel his presence. He is always going to be with us. 🙏



Warming up at the Paramount Theatre, Asbury Park, NJ.

JO LOPEZ PHOTO



"Right on his freakin' head!" Clarence, his hat, and Nils in Glendale, AZ, April 3, 2009.

JOSEPH QUEVER PHOTO



photograph by
**JOSEPH
QUEVER**

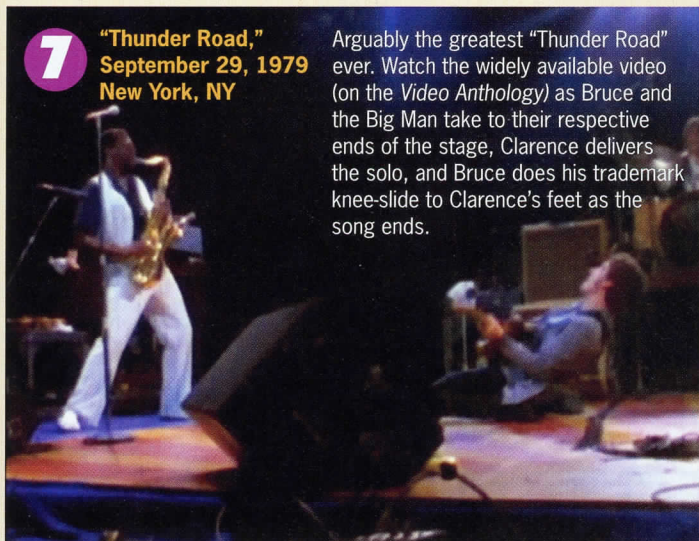
THE ESSENTIAL CLARENCE CLEMONS LIVE PLAYLIST

selected by GLENN RADECKI

10 **"The Promised Land," September 19, 1978, Passaic, NJ**
This song from one of the most famous of all Springsteen bootlegs highlights the E Street Band and the Big Man during what is often considered their performance peak. Clarence not only nails his solo but also makes key contributions on backing vocals.

9 **"The Ties That Bind," November 8, 2009, New York, NY**
From the show featuring *The River* from start to finish, Clarence's contributions were an essential component of what made this night at Madison Square Garden the best show of the Working on a Dream tour. Despite being hobbled by physical ailments, Clarence proved himself, on this night in particular, of being able to deliver with his saxophone performances.

8 **"Badlands," October 27, 2002, London, UK**
Although frequently placed at either the beginning or end of a set, "Badlands" has often been most powerful when performed midway through the show, as it was during the reunion and Rising tours. The performance of the song mid-set gave Bruce an opportunity bring the show to its highest point: Clarence's solo and the subsequent crowd participation. Listen for how the already-wild crowd takes things up a notch as the Big Man starts to blow.



7 **"Thunder Road," September 29, 1979 New York, NY**

Arguably the greatest "Thunder Road" ever. Watch the widely available video (on the *Video Anthology*) as Bruce and the Big Man take to their respective ends of the stage, Clarence delivers the solo, and Bruce does his trademark knee-slide to Clarence's feet as the song ends.

6 **"Born to Run," June 24, 1993, East Rutherford, NJ**
Many attendees of the Concert to Fight Hunger at the end of the 1992-'93 World Tour have noted that no Springsteen show has ever been louder than when Clarence Clemons came on stage at the Brendan Byrne Arena, making his first appearance with Bruce since 1989. Having already withstood guests including Steve Van Zandt and Max Weinberg, the roof was nearly brought down when the Big Man joined the band during "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out." They followed it up with "Born to Run." Due to a problem with the microphone on the sax, Bruce had to hold out his vocal mic so the sax could be heard. Listen as Bruce declares "Forever!" after Clarence finishes the solo.

5 **"Sherry Darling," July 26, 1984, Toronto, ON**
The sax solo is introduced with the unforgettable: "Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest human being that ever lived!" Check out the professionally-shot video (widely circulating) that shows how much fun Bruce and Clarence have with the song.

4 **"Rosalita (Come Out Tonight)," August 20, 1981, Los Angeles, CA**
The song has a great sax part, and this is already a show that every collector should have. But what cements the place of this song from the Vietnam Veterans of America benefit on this list is the introduction of Clarence

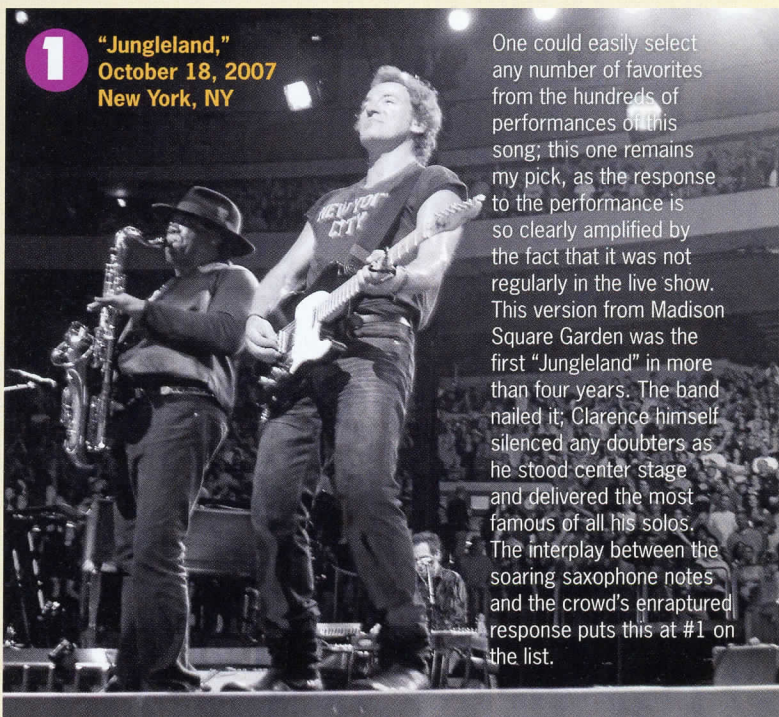
to the audience. Bruce has used superlatives of every conceivable kind to introduce Clarence over the years, but you can't dispute the coolness when he breaks it down letter-by-letter, as he did at this and other shows from that era:

'C' is for cool, which only a foolish man would dispute!
'L' is for lean and mean!
'A' is 'cause he's the ace of the saxophone!
'R' is 'cause he's a regular guy even though he's world renown!
'E' is for his everlasting love which I hold so dear!
'N' is for nasty: mess with him and your face he will smear!
'C' is for that C-note he owed me since last year!
And 'E' is for everything else

"You put that all together, what's that spell? What's that spell? What's that spell? Spotlight on the Big Man!"

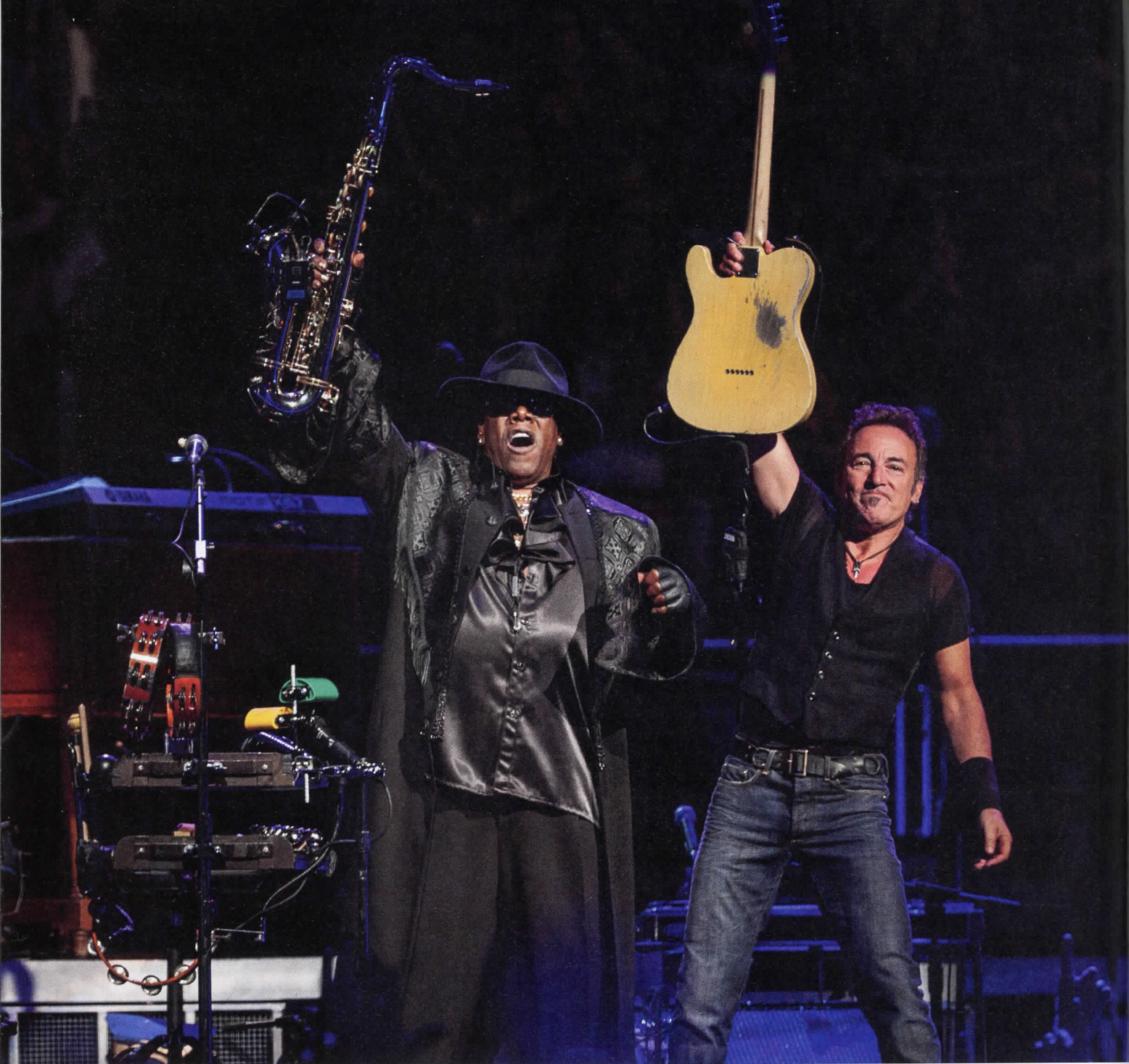
3 **"Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," November 19, 2007, Boston, MA**
The song's premiere on the Magic tour makes our playlist primarily for reasons other than performance. Yes, it was a fun and exciting version during the encore of the last show of the first leg of the tour. It is most poignant, however, as the last time that Bruce was able to tell the "story of the band" with the entire band present.

2 **"Growin' Up," October 2, 1985, Los Angeles, CA**
Although some may prefer the "Growin' Up" story told during the Buffalo show of November 2009, this version best exemplifies the nature of the Bruce and Clarence relationship. While the Buffalo story may have been closer to the "truth," this version from the final night of the Born in the U.S.A. tour is rightly legendary. Do not miss the professionally shot video of the performance (easily found on YouTube) — and ignore the bears and shade tree if they are too corny for your taste. The truly amazing parts of this definitive performance come at the end of the story, as "the clouds pulled away from the moon" and Bruce and Clarence "discover the answer to our quest," strapping on the saxophone and guitar. The power of the moment cannot be denied as the band builds to a crescendo, "and we knew that everything was gonna be alright, because, because, when we touched..."

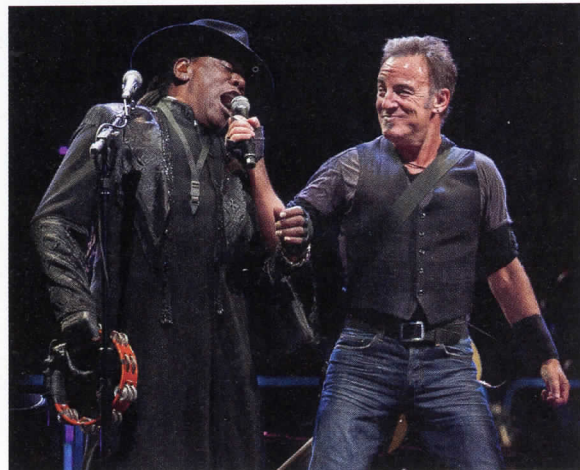


1 **"Jungleland," October 18, 2007 New York, NY**

One could easily select any number of favorites from the hundreds of performances of this song; this one remains my pick, as the response to the performance is so clearly amplified by the fact that it was not regularly in the live show. This version from Madison Square Garden was the first "Jungleland" in more than four years. The band nailed it; Clarence himself silenced any doubters as he stood center stage and delivered the most famous of all his solos. The interplay between the soaring saxophone notes and the crowd's enraptured response puts this at #1 on the list.



photographs by
**A.M.
SADDLER**





photographs by
**MICHAEL
ZORN**

REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

NICK MEAD

Director of WHO DO I THINK I AM?: A PORTRAIT OF A JOURNEY

I didn't know where to start when *Backstreets* asked me to write something about my friendship with Clarence, the trips made and the films made. Should it be funny, amusing, private, revealing... should I do it all? I thought I'd start at the beginning and see where the journey ends, which is a good way to sum up my relationship with Dr. Clemons.

Clarence loved to "play around the corner," which basically meant he'd take his horn and drive around looking for somewhere to play. Wherever he was, this is what he needed, as far as I could see—to play. From a small bar after a day's fishing in the Keys to jumping in with a Rolling Stones cover band in Beijing. And I'd film "around the corner": when he'd have his horn, I'd have my camera. It might be in Palm Beach, Miami, New York, Beijing, Fushun, London... wherever we happened to be. So as I write this I'm going to write around the corner and see what happens.

"Let's see what happens" was almost a catchphrase for us, a free-spirited catchphrase, to round off our discussion of whatever adventure would happen next. "Let's go to China... and see what happens."

I first met Clarence when I cast him in a film I made in 1998. I had written [the screenplay] as well, and I created the part of Jack just for him. Partly because I wanted to meet him, sure, but he was truly the film's inspiration—Clarence was the reason I wanted to make a film about the saxophone to begin with. The character of Jack was a jailed musician who would offer words of wisdom to his cellmate after teaching him to play the sax. "That one note can go a long way if it's the right note"—that kind of thing.

Clarence came straight from the airport to the set, and we had lunch. He needed no recovery time from the flight, he just got on with it. He was very black-and-white when it came to work: "Let's get the job done" was another of his mantras. It was an amazing feeling being in a trailer with him; you really did feel you were being graced by an incredible Presence, almost king-like. In fact, he checked into the hotel under the name Solomon King. I was not only overwhelmed but also really felt like a spoiled little boy. Being a film director can give way to those moments, like, "I want this," and you get it... and one thing you'd always wanted was a rock 'n' roll hero!

It was a fun shoot. Clarence was a joy to work with, and I loved hanging out with him. I recall being on set in East London, and as we drove across to West London for a meal, he'd ask about some rather important landmarks.



JO LOPEZ PHOTO COURTESY OF NICK MEAD

"What's that?" he asked as we crossed Westminster Bridge.

"That's the Houses of Parliament," I said.

"What do they do there?"

"That's where the law of the land comes from," I replied.

Past Westminster Abbey: "What's that?" he asked.

I replied, "Westminster Abbey."

"What's that?"

"Kind of an important church here."

Then up the Mall past Buckingham Palace. "What's that?" he asked.

"Buckingham Palace, where the Queen lives."

He looked out at it. "Mmmm, big house," he said.

His musical contribution to the film was magical. The soundtrack made the Top 10 soundtracks list in *Rolling Stone* and was voted soundtrack of the year in a poll in *People* magazine. It was the first time I was touched by the magic of the Big Man.

Most film friendships don't last, but I was hoping this one would, and when the work was done he was always up for a night out. One amazing thing happened that was slightly more amazing than a lot of the other amazing things I witnessed. At the end of the film I had a dinner party at a club called Groucho's, which Clarence loved, in central London. There were about 12 of us, a few of whom were very well known, so as a table it could be quite intimi-

dating, I guess. Anyway, as the meal came to a close, Clarence leaned back and said to me, "I'm gonna put it out there."

I said, "What?"

He said, "Watch."

So I watched, and he kind of meditated for a moment, and I kid you not: within a few minutes, a girl came and joined the table. It was no one we knew, just someone out there fearless enough to not care about who else was there, who just wanted to connect with Clarence—and he *told me it would happen*. Incredible. I soon got used to him doing it, but that first time... impressive. Maybe he was a wizard!?

We stayed in touch, and Clarence invited me over to Dublin when Bruce had reformed the E Street Band. I met him at the hotel and went to the soundcheck, was standing on stage when Bruce suddenly appeared, no messing about, straight into it, and I was stuck on stage standing next to Clarence. I tried to edge away a little bit, but there was a drop, so I just stood there. So I can kind of say "I was on stage with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band," but it's a little tenuous.

What was amazing, though, was the band, together. I'd never seen them in soundcheck mode. There were some workers on cranes overlooking the racetrack, and Bruce started singing to them—something like, "you guys up on the cranes..."—and the band kicked in



ABOVE: Clarence at the bar at the Seminole Hard Rock in Florida, a still from *Who Do I Think I Am?*

RIGHT: A letter from Clarence to Nick. "He wrote this letter to me during filming, except I didn't know it at the time," Mead says. "I gave him a notebook of mine during a sequence about 'Chinese express mail,' where you write a letter and burn it, and the smoke takes the message to your ancestors. This is what he wrote... I only found it later. It says it all, his feelings about the film we were making."

as if they had played that same song night after night for 20 years, yet he was making it up on the spur of the moment. It was a beautiful, blessed experience for me.

That night, Clarence told me to wait backstage when they played "Land of Hope and Dreams." I did so, and I was in his car waiting for a "fast out." The band finished their set, and they're off and out, and they had a police escort—which means I had a police escort, a first for me—but Clarence was in another place. As I was looking out the window, impressed by the blue flashing lights, he was crying. Like, *sobbing*.

I'm English, and we only cry at royal weddings or when Arsenal lose. But I tried to be the friend I was becoming: "Are you okay? Is there anything I can do?"

He just said, "That song tonight, when Bruce just kicked into it... it just got me."

I was blown away, after so many years together and so many nights onstage, that he would be so moved by one song. It was so real—so, so real—and whenever I'm doubtful, I think of that time of belief.

When we got to the Merrion Hotel, Bruce was waiting in the vestibule. He embraced Clarence and said words to the effect of, "Tonight you took the band to places we'd never been before, to places we never knew existed." I think Bruce was crying, Clarence definitely was, and then I started... and no royal wedding in sight!

Around 2004 I decided to move my family to a small island off Malaysia. I had three children and a rocky marriage. We thought we'd give it a go, explore the children's half-Asian roots, and hopefully save the marriage along the way. I called Clarence to let him know I was in Asia, and before I could say anything else, he said, "Me, too! I just got a house in Fushun." So I jumped on a plane to Beijing, flew on to Shenyang, and met up with Clarence, me with my camera, and him with his horn. We were basically just mucking about as friends in "adventure mode" when he suggested going to the Great Wall of China: he would play, I could film it.

So the next day, we're on some very scary ski-lift contraptions taking us to the top of the Great Wall. We block off the wall so we can get the shot. It's a great shot, and the people are wonderful—apart from one pissed off guy who pushed past security (I think "security" was a girl who was helping us named Deland) and shouted, "Who do you think you are?!" And that was it—I could see the cut in my head, freeze-frame and cut to a classic Bruce intro: "The next senator of New York, do I have to say his name..."

That night we stayed in Beijing—that's when Clarence played "around the corner" with a Chinese Rolling Stones cover band—and start-

Dear Nick,
This has been a Great Project
Doing this Project with you
you are the Greatest!
Thank you for all that
you have done to make this
Project a Wonderful Experience.
It has been one of the
Greatest Things that I have
ever done And it was done
Without "Bruce" or the East
Experience.
So I Look back on it,
This is a Story that has over-looked
To be
I will never Forget This Time
That will go down in history

ed talking, realizing that we might have a film here. We might have a film about something, and maybe we should start taking this a little bit seriously. So we did: we went into work mode and worked it all out, a spiritual journey initially, one that would find its own way. The main characters would reveal themselves, too. Deland evolved into a teacher and guide of sorts, which was delightful. The dynamic of Clarence being taught by someone so young showed another side of him, as a willing student who could put aside what he grew up with and take on board a whole new way of thinking. He often referred to her as the daughter he never had but wished he'd had.



More stills from the documentary: Clarence in China [left] and in the studio with Narada Michael Walden [right]

Back home, on the island, my marriage had collapsed. Clarence invited me to Palm Beach to live with him, to help me through it, which was quite amazing. I was in a bad way, and he truly was a great friend. He even offered to pay my airfare,

which, although I didn't need it, just meant he was thinking about everything: a real deep, thinking, caring man. He became an absolute rock in my life. We did everything together—along with Brian, his right-hand man at the time, and Tom Kline, driver extraordinaire—

playing the cigar bars of Palm Beach, like Angry Moon. We continued filming, not just for our film, which was evolving, but everything along the way.

We had great meals, from Carmine's to the little Jamaican place we'd go to for jerk chicken in the strip mall. He was the youngest, most energetic man I'd ever known. One night, about six in the evening, he said, "Let's go down to the Keys for dinner." I thought it was about a five-hour drive—something he might do with ease, having been on the road for so long he'd just switch to driving mode and get on with it, but I was dreading it. I can't sit still for that long. In any case, we head off... and soon enough we pick up 95 South, pull off at Palm Beach International, and he pulls up next to a private jet. Forty minutes later we're at a bar in the Keys, where he's welcomed like the king he is. It was an amazing night and an extraordinary show of generosity.

Clarence was a generous tipper, especially to fellow musicians, whom he'd refer to as "brothers." No musician in a hotel bar got away with less than 20 bucks. He taught me how to fish, out on the ocean in a big boat (though most of that time I actually spent on my back being seasick) and how to smoke a cigar. But the main thing I learned from him was to worry less and believe more.

The film premiered at the 2011 Garden State Film Festival, held in Asbury Park. When Clarence flew into New Jersey I met him at Newark—it was an hour out from our hotel, but after he pulled out his phone, it took us five hours to get back. Barnacle Bill's in Rumson was our first port of call, with clams the order of the day, and all points of fun along the way. Clarence made the ordinary extraordinary. It was a pleasure being in Asbury Park with Clarence, and to wander around looking at the haunts of his past. It's funny looking at legendary places when the legend has become a friend. I am forever grateful that we did that together.

The screening of *Who Do I Think I Am?* was sold out, with 1,600 people there, and he was as gracious and humble as ever. The film had been so long in the making that even I had lost sight of it. I sat next to Mike Appel at the screening, who kept reacting vocally, positively and vocally. At one point I looked around and

SWING SHIFT

CLARENCE'S GREAT LOST MOVIE ROLE

Swing, the 1999 Nick Mead film on which the director and Clarence Clemons first met and worked together, is well worth a watch if the opportunity arises; unfortunately, as of this writing the film remains somewhat in a state of limbo. Though it first received a fairly mainstream release in theaters by Touchstone Pictures, it's never been released on DVD and rarely if ever shows up on cable or broadcast television. If your old VCR is still around and operable, however, you may be able to rent or buy a VHS copy of this sweet, offbeat British film.

As Mead notes, he wrote the part of Jack specifically with Clarence in mind. Jack is a jazz saxophonist whose life has landed him inside a British jail, sharing a cell with Marty (Hugo Speer). While in prison together, Jack has taught Marty to play the sax. When Marty's jail sentence is about to end, Jack gives Marty his prized horn, along with plenty of sage advice. One of several kernels of wisdom that Mead wrote for Clarence: "Playing sax is like telling the truth. You never have to worry about repeating the same line... if you tell the truth."

Marty leaves jail determined to turn his life around and forge an honest career in music. He tries to enlist many of his old friends and associates into starting a swing band, including former girlfriend Joan, played by the great English singer Lisa Stansfield. Along with the Big Man on hand, the love of music and its power to change lives, the struggle of pursuing a dream, the father-son conflict and its moving resolution will all seem pleasingly familiar to Springsteen fans.

Not only did Mead arrange for Clarence's character Jack to play sax in the film, but also whenever Hugo Speer's Marty plays the saxophone onscreen, that's Clarence playing, too. In one scene where both Jack and Marty play onstage together, Clarence actually handled both sax parts. So the Big Man even got to flex his *musical* acting muscles. You actually can hear subtle differences in how each character's sax parts are played. An out-of-print soundtrack CD from the film is worth hunting down, too. It features fine performances by Clarence, Stansfield, and legendary British musician Georgie Fame, among others.

—Shawn Poole





The night of the *Who Do I Think I Am?* premiere at the Garden State Film Festival, two months before Clarence's death. Nick Mead says, "We had an after-party, and Bruce came to it. This meant a hell of a lot to Clarence because it was a big night to him personally, and Bruce came out for him. Clarence really appreciated that."

it seemed like everyone was in tears. Clarence had managed to touch everybody. It was a fabulous moment. The after-party was madness but fun, and when Bruce turned up, it got even nuttier. It was cool that he turned out for his friend, very cool indeed.

The film was picked up for distribution by Virgil Entertainment in New York. They asked the never-asked question, "Can you make it longer?" So we added 20 minutes to it. We were planning to do the extra voiceover the week before Clarence died; I delayed the trip because I wanted to see my youngest son, Oliver, in his school play of *Jersey Boys*, which is rather ironic. Now the film will forever be a perpetual work in progress, and in that regard it's a rather fitting memorial to someone who, as Bruce rather aptly put it, was himself a work in progress.

He used to call me two or three times a week, sometimes two or three times a day if he was inspired. "NICK MEAD — BIG MAN!" he'd boom. We had plans for many things. One was a burlesque album inspired by Sil Austin, and we'd spent many hours on Singer Island listening to the music that inspired his father to get him that

sax when he was nine. Clarence was thrilled to have worked with Lady Gaga. We went down to her video shoot in L.A. together, and he was fired up so much by her energy, by her as an artist. You can take it from me that she is an exceedingly nice person—and I can share this secret with you about the video: when Lady Gaga licks the ground, she's actually licking tequila. I know, because we brought the tequila!

So much of my time with Clarence seems like a dream now. And while these bizarre, true stories make me thankful that I knew Clarence Clemons, the important things I take with me were what he'd instill in me whenever I got to Singer Island—to relax, to shake the city off, and clear your mind. To prepare yourself for the Big Man experience, to let it flow. To not obstruct, just to open your mind and let it in. To believe it and it will happen. To worry less and believe more. 🙌

Who Do I Think I Am? has had several screenings to date. After its premiere at the Garden State Film Festival in Asbury Park ("On the way there, we got a text saying that the fire marshal was turning people away," Nick says. "He loved that"), the

documentary was shown publicly at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, the 2012 Glory Days Bruce Springsteen Symposium, and most recently at the 2013 CBGB Festival. An auction for a private screening raised funds for Little Kids Rock.

As for future distribution, "it's been more than two years since Clarence had done the deal with Virgil Entertainment for its release," Mead tells *Backstreets* now. "Obviously, tragedy got in the way." But as we go to press, the director sounds hopeful: "Joe [Amodei, president of Virgil] and I had a great meeting with the family and estate representatives in Arizona, finally ironing out the agreement which would make Clarence's vision for this film complete." If all goes as planned, he says, "the proceeds of Clarence's film will be going to charity. It's absolutely right that his legacy lives on in the continuing support of people less fortunate than ourselves."

Joe Amodei tells us, "It's been a very long road for Nick and me. But I made a promise to both Nick and Clarence that I would help get this story, Clarence's story, out to the world. I then made that same promise to Clarence's brother Bill. I'm not a man who goes back on his word."

Watch *Backstreets.com* for updates on the film's release.



JAKE CLEMONS



Jake with his cousin, Clarence's son Jarod, on the Wrecking Ball tour, December 6, 2012.

June 21, 2011
Palm Beach, FL

Thanks to Jake for sharing with us this extended version of his eulogy for his uncle.

A new constellation has been born. A star too big even for its large earthly body has risen from ashes like a phoenix and returned home, continuing to shine as part of our ancient galaxy. I was in a hotel business center when an urgent notice came to me about Clarence. I was on tour in Europe and immediately got on a plane to be by his side. Our closeness was no secret to anyone. I loved him. He loved me. A tough loss doesn't even begin to define the shifting paradigm that began in that moment.

You see, Clarence was my Santa Claus... an immortal figure that always inspired goodness and hope. He brought joy with him everywhere. And though I was not blind to his shortcomings as a man, or the frailty that became his body, these were all quickly dismissed by his enormous and inescapable love. Being near to Clarence meant being protected,

REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

being accepted; both cared for and cared about. Having been by his side for several surgeries and procedures, I became comfortable with the understanding that if all else failed and bones broke or organs gave out, My Beloved Big Man would still be here. They were able to replace shattered hips, worn-out knees, and even put a corrective machine on his heart... they would just keep fixing our (what we had coined) Six Billion Dollar Man. His final passing has been beyond crushing.

Navigating the troubled waters of his failing health and into his eternal sleep has been trying to say the least. The burden of such a loss is insurmountably deep and heavy. Clarence was more than an uncle to me. He was my hero. He loved me like a father, we talked as best friends and played together as brothers. People would often go back and forth about our blood relation, and I've never been one to correct this... he was *all* of these things to me. It's a strange new world without Clarence. He has given so much through the years, and now we are left with a gaping Big Man-sized hole in the universe.

Yet, as his gift continues to inspire, and as we all continue to process the vast changes of our reality, I again turn to music. It's what I have. It's what he gave me from the first moment of seeing him on stage. It's what he's left me with now, and the closeness and the love he and I shared will always remain captured in a moment through pursed lips on a metal mouthpiece. Thanks to Bruce, Glen, Eddie, and encouragement from several others, I picked up an instrument and found my solace, again in music. From deep inside my lungs, as though blowing life through a hollow chamber, I can still feel him. Finding him in each note, near to me... alive.

People have been saying to me, "It's up to you now"... "You carry the torch"... "You are the legacy." But this job is not one to be fulfilled by any single person; Clarence was more than a saxophone player, he was an ambassador with a mission to spread love and joy to the world. It's up to all of us now. We must all carry the torch. We must all be his legacy. The world will continue to change, and the pain will continue to be present. But today we can bear hope, that the marks he left on us will encourage us to be Bigger, to share the message of love and joy to the world, and to carry each other, even when the stakes are down.

Bruce would often say, "You want to be like him, but you cannot." Clarence said in one of his final memos, "I'm here to tell you that you can be. You can be the next Big Man, but it's going to take a lot of work, a lot of determination, and a lot of inspiration... to be the next Big Man."

"In the end, three things remain: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love." Thank you, Clarence, for being such a great beacon; such a Big Man. In the very words you would often share so beautifully, I return this message to you: "I love you. The Universe loves you. Be happy."

May we carry the torch well. 🕯️



Above, the Big Man and his nephew joined the band: Clarence and Jake were on the E Street stage together in Dublin, Ireland, when Jake guested on July 11, 2009.



Jake joined forces with J.T. Bowen (right) to pay tribute to his uncle at the 2011 HomeSafe Classic (helphomesafe.org). That night with the Temple of Soul, he performed the "Jungleland" solo; Clarence's music director John Colby told us, "Jake just nailed it." A sign of things to come. Hollywood, FL, October 1, 2011.

ABOVE: RENE VAN DIEMEN PHOTOS; LEFT: LARRY MARANO PHOTO



REMEMBERING CLARENCE CLEMONS

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

FOR THE BIG MAN

June 21, 2011
Palm Beach, FL

An abbreviated form of "For the Big Man" appeared in the Wrecking Ball tourbook; this lengthier version was posted on bruce.springsteen.net on June 29, 2011, with an introduction from Springsteen: "This is a slightly revised version of the eulogy I delivered for Clarence at his memorial. I'd like to thank all our fans and friends who have comforted us over the past difficult weeks." In addition to delivering the eulogy that day at Royal Poinciana Chapel, Bruce also performed a slow acoustic "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" by himself and sang "You're a Friend of Mine" with Jackson Browne and the E Street Band.

I've been sitting here listening to everyone talk about Clarence and staring at that photo of the two of us right there. It's a picture of Scooter and the Big Man, people who we were sometimes. As you can see in this particular photo, Clarence is admiring his muscles and I'm pretending to be nonchalant while leaning upon him. I leaned on Clarence a lot; I made a career out of it in some ways.

Those of us who shared Clarence's life shared with him his love and his confusion.

Though "C" mellowed with age, he was always a wild and unpredictable ride. Today I see his sons Nicky, Chuck, Christopher, and Jarod sitting here, and I see in them the reflection of a lot of "C"'s qualities. I see his light, his darkness, his sweetness, his roughness, his gentleness, his anger, his brilliance, his handsomeness, and his goodness. But, as you boys know, your pop was a not a day at the beach. "C" lived a life where he did what he wanted to do, and he let the chips, human and otherwise, fall where they may. Like a lot of us, your pop was capable of great magic and also of making quite an amazing mess. This was just the nature of your daddy and my beautiful friend. Clarence's unconditional love, which was very real, came with a lot of conditions. Your pop was a major project and always a work in progress. "C" never approached anything linearly; life never proceeded in a straight line. He never went A... B... C... D. It was always A... J... C... Z... Q... I...! That was the way Clarence lived and made his way through the world. I know that can lead to a lot of confusion and hurt, but your father also carried a lot of love with him, and I know he loved each of you very, very dearly.

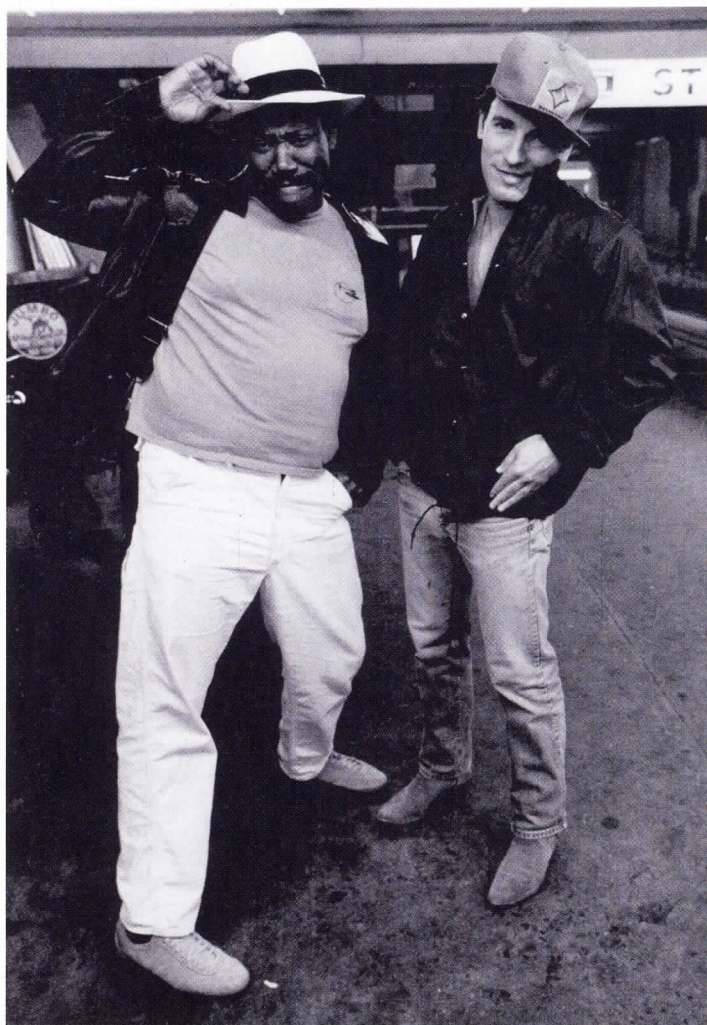
It took a village to take care of Clarence Clemons. Tina, I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for taking care of my friend, for loving him. Victoria, you've been a loving, kind, and caring wife to Clarence, and you made a huge difference in his life at a time when the going

was not always easy. To all of "C"'s vast support network — names too numerous to mention — you know who you are, and we thank you. Your rewards await you at the pearly gates. My pal was a tough act, but he brought things into your life that were unique, and when he turned on that love light, it illuminated your world. I was lucky enough to stand in that light for almost 40 years, near Clarence's heart, in the Temple of Soul.

So, a little bit of history: from the early days when Clarence and I traveled together, we'd pull up to the evening's lodgings and within minutes "C" would transform his room into a world of his own. Out came the colored scarves to be draped over the lamps, the scented candles, the incense, the patchouli oil, the herbs, the music, the day would be banished, entertainment would come and go, and Clarence the Shaman would reign and work his magic night, after night. Clarence's ability to enjoy Clarence was incredible. By 69, he'd had a good run, because he'd already lived about ten lives, 690 years in the life of an average man. Every night, in every place, the magic came flying out of C's suitcase. As soon as success allowed, his dressing room would take on the same trappings as his hotel room until a visit there was like a trip to a sovereign nation that had just struck huge oil reserves. "C" always knew how to live. Long before Prince was out of his diapers, an air of raunchy mysticism ruled in the



BARBARA PYLE PHOTO



JAMES SHINE PHOTO

Big Man's world. I'd wander in from my dressing room, which contained several fine couches and some athletic lockers, and wonder what I was doing wrong! Somewhere along the way all of this was christened the Temple of Soul; and "C" presided smilingly over its secrets, and its pleasures. Being allowed admittance to the Temple's wonders was a lovely thing.

As a young child my son Sam became enchanted with the Big Man... no surprise. To a child Clarence was a towering fairy tale figure, out of some very exotic storybook. He was a dreadlocked giant, with great hands and a deep mellifluous voice sugared with kindness and regard. And to Sammy, who was just a little white boy, he was deeply and mysteriously black. In Sammy's eyes, "C" must have appeared as all of the African continent, shot through with American cool, rolled into one welcoming and loving figure. So... Sammy decided to pass on my work shirts and became fascinated by Clarence's suits and his royal robes. He declined a seat in dad's van and opted for "C"'s stretch limousine, sitting by his side on the slow cruise to the show. He decided dinner in front of the hometown locker just wouldn't do, and he'd saunter up the hall and disappear into the Temple of Soul.

Of course, also enchanted was Sam's dad, from the first time I saw my pal striding out of the shadows of a half-empty bar in Asbury

Park, a path opening up before him; here comes my brother, here comes my sax man, my inspiration, my partner, my lifelong friend. Standing next to Clarence was like standing next to the baddest ass on the planet. You were proud, you were strong, you were excited and laughing with what might happen, with what together, you might be able to do. You felt like no matter what the day or the night brought, nothing was going to touch you. Clarence could be fragile but he also emanated power and safety, and in some funny way we became each other's protectors; I think perhaps I protected "C" from a world where it still wasn't so easy to be big and black. Racism was ever present, and over the years together, we saw it. Clarence's celebrity and size did not make him immune. I think perhaps "C" protected me from a world where it wasn't always so easy to be an insecure, weird and skinny white boy either. But, standing together we were badass, on any given night, on our turf, some of the baddest asses on the planet. We were united, we were strong, we were righteous, we were unmovable, we were funny, we were corny as hell and as serious as death itself. And we were coming to your town to shake you and to wake you up. Together, we told an older, richer story about the possibilities of friendship that transcended those I'd written in my songs and in my music. Clarence carried it in his heart. It was a story where the Scooter and the

Big Man not only busted the city in half, but we kicked ass and *remade* the city, shaping it into the kind of place where our friendship would not be such an anomaly. And that... that's what I'm gonna miss. The chance to renew that vow and double down on that story on a nightly basis, because that is something, that is *the* thing that we did together... the two of us. Clarence was big, and he made me feel, and think, and love, and dream big. How big was the Big Man? *Too fucking big to die.* And that's just the facts. You can put it on his grave stone, you can tattoo it over your heart. Accept it... it's the New World.

Clarence doesn't leave the E Street Band when *he* dies. He leaves when *we* die.

So, I'll miss my friend, his sax, the force of nature his sound was, his glory, his foolishness, his accomplishments, his face, his hands, his humor, his skin, his noise, his confusion, his power, his peace. But his love and his story, the story that he gave me, that he whispered in my ear, that he allowed me to tell... and that he gave to *you*... is gonna carry on. I'm no mystic, but the undertow, the mystery and power of Clarence and my friendship leads me to believe we must have stood together in other, older times, along other rivers, in other cities, in other fields, doing our modest version of god's work... work that's still unfinished. So I won't say goodbye to my brother, I'll simply say, see you in the next life, further on up the road, where we will



"The story that he gave me, that he whispered in my ear..." One of the last known photographs of Clarence and Bruce together, following the *Who Do I Think I Am?* premiere at the 2011 Garden State Film Festival. April 2, 2011, Synaxis restaurant, Asbury Park, NJ. Photograph by Teresa Pyskaty-Lamicella.

once again pick up that work, and get it done.

Big Man, thank you for your kindness, your strength, your dedication, your work, your story. Thanks for the miracle... and for letting a little white boy slip through the side door of the Temple of Soul.

SO LADIES AND GENTLEMAN... ALWAYS LAST, BUT NEVER LEAST. LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE MASTER OF DISASTER, the BIG KAHUNA, the MAN WITH A PH.D IN SAXUAL HEALING, the DUKE OF PADUCAH, the KING OF THE WORLD, LOOK OUT OBAMA! THE NEXT BLACK PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES EVEN THOUGH HE'S DEAD... YOU WISH YOU COULD BE LIKE HIM BUT YOU CAN'T! LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE BIGGEST MAN YOU'VE EVER SEEN!... GIVE ME A C-L-A-R-E-N-C-E. WHAT'S THAT SPELL? CLARENCE! WHAT'S THAT SPELL? CLARENCE! WHAT'S THAT SPELL? CLARENCE! ... amen.

I'm gonna leave you today with a quote from the Big Man himself, which he shared on the plane home from Buffalo, the last show of the last tour. As we celebrated in the front cabin, congratulating one another and telling tales of the many epic shows, rocking nights, and good times we'd shared, "C" sat quietly, taking it all in, then he raised his glass, smiled and said to all gathered, "This could be the start of something big."

Love you, "C." 🐉



A.M. SADDLER PHOTO

LAST, BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST... ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE STAGE... THE MAN HIMSELF... HOW CAN I SAY IT? A GENTLEMAN THAT NEEDS ABSOLUTELY NO INTRODUCTION... LET ME START OUT BY SAYING... A CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF MINE... HIS MAJESTY... PRINCE OF THE CITY... DUKE OF PADUCAH... THE KAHUNA HIMSELF OF SOUL... THE DUDE... MR. HOLLYWOOD... MOKSHAGUN... MASTER OF DISASTER... CHIEF EXORCISER... THE MAN WHO MAKES THE DEVIL RUN HOME SCREAMING FOR HIS MAMA... THE BIGGEST MAN ON THE NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE... PROBABLY THE NEXT KING OF ENGLAND... HE'S BAD, HE'S NATIONWIDE... WALKING HISTORY... MR. MYSTERY... A MAN THAT IS A LEGEND IN HIS OWN TIME... POET... SCHOLAR... AUTHOR... SAXOPHONIST... SEXUAL ADVENTURER... LIBERTINE... MAN OF LETTERS... HE'S BIGGER THAN SHAKESPEARE... HIS BOOK IS BETTER THAN THE BIBLE... IN THIS CORNER, WEIGHING IN AT HEAVIER THAN YOU, THE UNDEFEATED HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION... THE ONE... THE ONLY... THE GREAT ONE... THE BIGGEST MAN YOU'VE EVER SEEN... THAT'S RIGHT... FROM NORFOLK, VA VIA SAYREVILLE, NJ, AND WHAT A TRIP IT WAS... NOT ORIGINALLY FROM NEW JERSEY, BUT WHO'S GONNA TELL HIM?... FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET... MORE POWERFUL AND BADDER THAN A LOCOMOTIVE... HE CAN LEAP TALL WOMEN, I MEAN TALL BUILDINGS IN A SINGLE BOUND... SOCRATES OF THE SAXOPHONE... MASTER OF ALL THINGS BIG AND SMALL... KING OF THE WORLD... LORD OF TIME AND SPACE... MASTER OF THE WHOLE MOTHERFUCKING UNIVERSE, KNOWN AND UNKNOWN... IF WE LIVED IN A RIGHTEOUS NATION, THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES... A MAN WITHOUT WHOM WE WOULDN'T BE HERE TONIGHT... THE HANDSOMEST MAN YOU HAVE EVER SEEN... THE MIGHTIEST MAN IN ALL THE DAMN LAND... THE MAN THAT MAKES MY LIFE COMPLETE... I HAVE THE SEEN THE FUTURE OF THE WHOLE FUCKING THING, AND IT IS... THE GREATEST MAN IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION... THE INCREDIBLE... THE UNMISTAKABLE... THE UNDENIABLE... THE INEXPLICABLE... THE UNBELIEVABLE... THE INDESTRUCTIBLE... THE SKY OPENED UP AND THE EARTH BEGAN TO RUMBLE... HE CRAWLED OUT OF HIS LITTLE BABY CRIB WHEN HE WAS TWO YEARS OLD AND FOUND A DUSTY SAXOPHONE IN THE CLOSET... MINISTER OF SOUL... SECRETARY OF THE BROTHERHOOD... THE EMPEROR OF E STREET... IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? WHAT THE HELL IS IT? DO I HAVE TO SPEAK THE WORDS?... DO I HAVE TO SAY HIS NAME?... DON'T MAKE ME SAY IT... WHAT'S THAT NAME?... SAY WHO?... IS IT THE BIG MAN HIMSELF?... LADIES & GENTLEMEN, I SAY IT NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, I KNOW YOU WISH YOU COULD BE LIKE HIM BUT I'M SORRY, YOU CAN NOT — DON'T EVEN TRY — BECAUSE **UNDER THE SUN THERE'S ONLY ONE CLARENCE "BIG MAN" CLEMONS**



Photograph by
ERIC MEOLA

UNDERGROUND

By Fred Mills

The Unbroken Promise: Lighting Up the Darkness Sessions

(Godfather 6CD)

SOUND QUALITY: 7-10

PACKAGING: 10

As great as 2010's official 3CD/3DVD *The Promise: The Darkness On the Edge of Town* story box was, any Springsteen collector with even a basic awareness of what lurks in the Boss archives knew that the inclusion of 21 unreleased tracks, though revelatory, only scratched the surface. With *The Unbroken Promise*, Godfather puts acetylene torch and crowbar to the vault door and extracts six CDs boasting a whopping 74 outtakes. And while most if not all of the material has surfaced in the past on various labels' attempts to index the sprawling *Darkness* oeuvre (including *Godfather*, which just a few years ago released the 2CD *The Definitive Darkness Outtakes Remastered*, an upgrade of the classic E St. Records title), assembling such a trove for a single release represents an admirable labor of love. *The Unbroken Promise* also passes the box-set sniff-test with flying colors: the handsome 6.5" x 6.5" x 1.5" box features an interior tray to snugly house the three double-disc sets, and included is a foldout mini-poster plus a fat, full-color 48-page book with exhaustive track-by-track descriptions/annotations. (The liners give thanks and credit to both Brucebase and the 2002 Italian book about Springsteen's music, *American Skin*.)

Sound quality varies, but there's still a remarkable sonic consistency throughout that clearly suggests the compilers applied due diligence in the equalization and remastering processes. In that same spirit, the tracks themselves are sequenced thematically for each of the 2CD sets, with an ear towards a rewarding, sit-back-and-soak-it-in experience for the listener.

Part 1, *Still in the Vaults*, purports to collect *Darkness* recording/mixing sessions—effectively May 1977 through April 1978—material not previously



Unpacking *The Unbroken Promise*.

covered on the 1998 *Tracks* rarities collection or on *The Promise*. Highlights are numerous, both of familiar songs (for example, three versions of "Drive All Night," each quite different; early takes of additional *River* cuts "Sherry Darling," "Ramrod," and "Independence Day"; even the legendary "Frankie," long a favorite among collectors) and of the relatively obscure (such as the Bo Diddley-inspired "Preacher's Daughter" and the rockabilly-flavored "Crazy Rocker").

Part 2, *A Masterpiece in the Making*, presents each of the ten *Darkness* songs in multiple alternate versions, i.e., four recordings of "Badlands" followed by three of "Something in the Night," then four of "Racing in the Street," etc. It's a moderately successful attempt to provide insight into how particular tracks evolved, and to illuminate some of the musical choices Bruce made along the way. The first of three takes of "Prove It All Night" even find him borrowing the lyrics to "Something in the Night" for a guide vocal, since he hadn't yet completed the song!

Lastly, Part 3, *The Alternate Versions*, is a compendium of alternate takes of songs that did make it onto *Tracks* and *The Promise*, among them "Candy's Boy," "Rendezvous,"

"Fire," "Hearts of Stone," "The Promise" (three versions), "Because the Night" (two versions) and more. For this pair of discs the detailed liner notes are particularly useful as they outline the studio/date provenance of the tunes and suggest how their stylistic nuances contrast with the officially released rarities.

The bottom line: *The Unbroken Promise* serves as both a compelling companion to the official *Darkness* box—it's a no-brainer for longtime fans—and a fascinating attraction for bootleg novices who love Bruce but perhaps arrived on the scene during the mp3 era and therefore haven't yet been bitten by the collector's bug. Watch out, kids, this one could spawn a serious habit.

Second Night at the Capitol Theater

(Godfather 3CD)

VENUE: Capitol Theater

CITY: Passaic, NJ

DATE: Sept. 20, 1978

SOUND QUALITY: 9

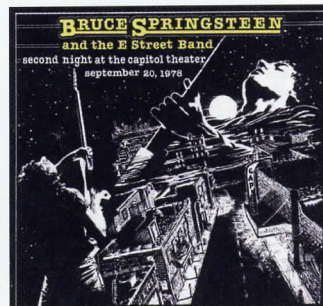
PERFORMANCE: 9

PACKAGING: 9

The E Streeters' three-night *Darkness* tour stand in Passaic, New Jersey yielded, of course, the legendary *Pièce de Résistance* vinyl bootleg, from the FM broadcast of the first night (9/19/78). Upgraded in the CD

era by Crystal Cat as *Passaic Night*, its place in the very upper echelon of Bruce boots has long been indisputable. The remaining two shows of the stand were no slouches, either, but compared to broadcast quality, the circulating recorded documents have always paled. Winged Wheel tackled night two (*2nd Night at the Capitol Theater*, taken from the audio track of the closed circuit video, with *Apocalypse Sound* releasing the film on DVD), and night three (9/21/78) has appeared as *The Bosses* [sic] *Birthday Party* (BS) and *Singin' Our Birthday Songs* (Godfather).

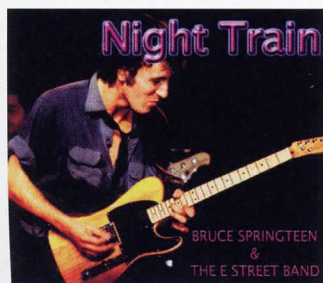
Then in early 2012, the JEMS archivists unleashed a pair of jaw-dropping torrents: soundboards from September 20 and 21, sourced to reels made by a mobile recording truck and now circulated as *Donceur de Vivre* and *Coup de Grace*, respectively. Godfather has tapped the former JEMS title for its latest Bruceleg,



filling out Disc 3 with the previously circulated 35-minute soundcheck material from the Capitol Theater.

In this issue's "Burning Down the Road" column, Flynn McLean discusses the tapes' provenance and quality, and I'll add my thumbs-up: the intro guitar solo to "Prove It All Night" alone will take your breath away, and I defy anyone to resist tearing up during the organ/piano interplay of Danny and Roy (thanks to their prominence in the mix) on "Incident on 57th Street." Having the soundcheck tracks—among them, a radically different, early version of "The Ties That Bind" and a snippet of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love"—all under one cover is nice, too. They've appeared on disc in bits and pieces over the years, accompanied by an ongoing debate as the exact date; Brucebase currently logs them as 9/20, as does the Godfather sleeve.

The trifold package includes a 4-panel booklet with copious liners (lifted, uncredited, from the Jungleland site) plus a mini-poster reproducing the famous Arlen Schumer art for the Capitol shows. On balance: though pirated, another offer you can't refuse from the digital don.



Night Train
(Anubis 3CDR)
VENUE: The Fox Theatre
CITY: Atlanta, GA
DATE: Sept. 30, 1978
SOUND QUALITY: 8.5
PERFORMANCE: 9.5
PACKAGING: 7

Do we really need another *Darkness*-tour FM-sourced bootleg? 'Deed we do! Despite the godhead status of the San Francisco and Passaic broadcasts, there's rarely a dull moment to be found among 1978 Boss titles. On September 30, the E Street Band rolled into the Fox Theatre and proceeded to blow the roof off, starting with an opening salvo of "Good Rockin'

Tonight"/"Badlands"/"Spirit in the Night" and proceeding through the bulk of *Darkness* plus selected other goodies, including the only known performance of the old James Brown nugget "Night Train."

To date, though, there's been an asterisk: as originally aired live over 20 FM stations throughout the Southeast (and subsequently bootlegged as *Same Old Played Out Scenes, Here's To Ya, Fox Theatre Presents The Boss*, etc.), the show was marked by persistent gremlins in the audio, generally attributed to bad weather in the region affecting the broadcast. Cut to the near-present: last fall the online Bruce mavens at JEMS unveiled a pre-FM recording of the Fox concert (again, see this issue's "Burning Down the Road" column), courtesy of a fan who bequeathed them with two cassettes (reportedly copied directly from 15 IPS reels). Even after careful repair and restoration of the tapes there were still a few glitches, such as an absent section of "Prove It" that had to be patched in from another source, as well as missing encores that were recovered using a slightly flawed broadcast reel from Miami's WINZ-FM. But the overall listening experience is still outstanding.

Anubis, then, has stepped in with its own professionally designed iteration of the JEMS Archive Upgrade series entry while adding, in the label's words, "light equalization and... better final mastering" to help bring the Fox show into its own, after all these years, and remove that asterisk from the logbooks.



Apollo
(Crystal Cat 3CD)
Folk 'n' Roll in the Temple of Soul
(Godfather 2CD)
VENUE: Apollo Theater
CITY: New York City, NY
DATE: March 9, 2012
SOUND QUALITY: 9/9.5
PERFORMANCE: 9/9
PACKAGING: 10/7

Dueling discs for the SiriusXM-broadcast and *Wrecking Ball* tour warm-up (which was so special "it didn't feel like a

tour warm-up," as Editor Phillips aptly noted in his review at Backstreets.com). Incredibly, "Born to Run" was *not* performed at the Apollo (it would also be absent from the March 15 show in Austin but would return to setlists for the tour proper). That said, the only thing truly missing, given the context, was Bruce sending the immortal command "Bootleggers, roll your tapes!" out over the satellite airwaves, like he did back in '78 at the Roxy. Never fear, though: roll those tapes, they most certainly did.

In this corner, Crystal Cat, with the full concert plus some additional material, including a third CD containing the SiriusXM pre-show featuring hosts Meg Griffin and Dave Marsh talking to Max Weinberg, Jon Landau and Willie Nile. In the other corner, Godfather, with a two-disc, all-music/no-yakking version. Since both sets boast immaculate sound quality and each should retail for roughly the same price—the bonus CC disc comes free—which one should the fan on a budget spring for?

The transparent tabby's title does offer that bonus disc, not to mention, on CD2, an 18-minute post-event recap from Griffin and Marsh; interesting, but hardly essential listening. Also appearing on CD2, strangely, is "Surprise, Surprise," an acoustic Bruce track from Pittsburgh 11/4/11. More isn't always better. Packaging-wise, though, this release is the most attractive CC offering in years, a tri-fold wallet design rather than the customary fatboy jewel case, boasting a 20-page booklet crammed with photos, setlist reproduction, and a detailed concert review (oddly, the text cuts off after a discussion of "Rocky Ground").

Meanwhile, the version from the digital don is a bit more perfunctory, with no booklet or extra audio. However, the actual sonics seem to have compression applied to lend more depth and presence than Crystal Cat's, which by comparison have a tell-tale "crispiness" one sometimes associates with a broadcast. It's not really what you'd call a notable difference; either release will leave the listener more than satisfied. Though bear in mind that as of summer 2012, the smartest money may actually be on "none of the above": SiriusXM's

encore broadcast of the show over Memorial Day weekend was remastered by Bob Ludwig, so an upgrade surely awaits.



Greetings From Buffalo N.Y.
(Godfather 3CD)
VENUE: HSBC Arena
CITY: Buffalo, NY
DATE: November 22, 2009
SOUND QUALITY: 8
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 9

Buffalo got the final show of the *Working on a Dream* world trek. Any tour finale is bound to be special; but of course Springsteen always seems to go out of his way to underscore its significance. Ergo, a three-and-a-half-hour blowout featuring the *Greetings From Asbury Park*, N.J. album, done start to finish, something the E Streeters had never attempted before. What an early Christmas present for Buffalo. Did the band pull it off? Boy, did they ever, from a majestic, apocalyptic "Lost in the Flood" and a blistering rave-up of "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City" to a moving "The Angel" (a song reportedly only played live before once, in '96 at the Royal Albert Hall) and a full-blown monologue for "Growin' Up." And that's just the first third of the evening.

The sonics here are solid, with good depth and separation for the audience recording; it's one of the better-sounding recent Godfather titles. However, per Flynn McLean's previous reporting about Buffalo ["Burning Down the Road," *Backstreets* #90], with two different IEM/wireless/soundboard sources of the show also in circulation, an audience-only release feels beside the point. The packaging, though, is noteworthy. Along with a booklet and mini-poster, the front of the CD sleeve and the discs themselves are visual homages to the original *Greetings* LP art. Nice touch. 🐾

To quote Beyoncé, something few would think likely in these pages, “Let me upgrade U.” The months prior to the Wrecking Ball tour were very generous to collectors, as several classic Springsteen recordings from the mid-to-late ’70s received significant upgrades, including one that should vault that particular show from a nearly forgotten footnote to its rightful place among the legendary ’78 broadcasts.

We all know the Roxy, the Agora, Passaic, and Winterland radio broadcasts, but often overlooked is the September 30, 1978, broadcast from the Fox Theater in Atlanta, Georgia. According to legend, a wave of thunderstorms tore through the Southeast that night, wreaking havoc on radio signals; we’ll leave it to weather historians to determine that tale’s accuracy, but in any case, recordings from that show paled considerably in comparison to the Big Four, leaving Atlanta as the red-headed stepchild of the radio broadcasts. Of course, Darkness tour enthusiasts will tell you that the Fox show easily ranks with the other broadcasts from a performance standpoint. The best circulating recording from Atlanta had been Doberman’s *Same Old Played Out Scenes*, but it doesn’t touch Passaic or Winterland in terms of sound quality.

However, that changed in a major way when JEMS made available through popular torrent sites a completely new, previously uncirculated, pre-FM recording of the Fox broadcast. The sound quality on this new source is nothing short of breathtaking, putting it not only on the same level as the rest but also in direct competition for the title of Best Sounding ’78 Broadcast. As the liner notes to the new recording tell us, the pre-FM recording means that the compression in over-the-air broadcasts is not found, giving it a larger—and truer—dynamic range, plus wider stereo separation as well.

This new pre-FM source still came with a few flaws of its own: it didn’t include the encores, and there are a few stretches where, despite all efforts, the tape could not be played properly. To fill in those gaps, another previously uncirculated recording was utilized, this time from an over-the-air broadcast from WINZ in Miami. While the shift in sound quality is noticeable, it’s nowhere close to a deal-breaker.

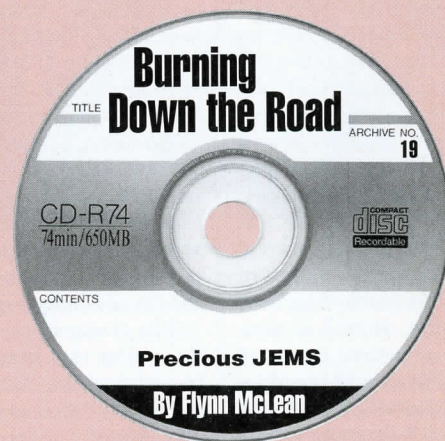
The show itself has always been known as the only time Springsteen ever played the James Brown classic “Night Train,” calling out the various cities on the train’s itinerary. Then there’s the opening “Good Rockin’ Tonight,” plus, of course, all the songs that made the Darkness tour special, including an amazing “Independence Day.” In short, this recording immediately became a must-have.

Ten days prior to the broadcast from the Fox, Bruce was in the middle of a three-night run at the Capitol Theater in Passaic, NJ, a stand that has attained legendary status. The broadcast from the first night, September 19, 1978, is still considered one of the best bootlegs by any artist, ever; the subsequent shows

circulate from clear-but-dynamically-lacking soundboard sources, and in-house video from the first two nights circulates widely.

In early 2012, JEMS reached deep into their bag of goodies and pulled out tapes of the September 20 and 21 shows that were, according to the liner notes, “professionally recorded on reel-to-reel by a mobile recording truck outside the theatre.” These are massive upgrades over the previously circulating soundboard recordings. Both recordings are amazingly clear, with excellent instrument separation and dynamic range. This is also a rare situation where the recordings sound so similar that you can choose your favorite based solely on setlist and performance.

JEMS titled their September 20 release *Douceur de Vivre*, French for “the sweetness of life,” to continue a theme started by the original vinyl bootleg with the apt moniker



Pièce de Résistance. With a handful of set list changes from the previous night—an opening “Good Rockin’ Tonight,” “It’s My Life,” and the “Incident”/“Rosalita” combination—it has a slightly different feel than the famous broadcast.

The final night, September 21, was released under the title *Coup de Grâce* (“finishing blow”). Just two days before Bruce’s 29th birthday, several surprises were in store, not the least of which was a scantily clad young woman who popped out of a birthday cake. Of course for us, listening 35 years later, Bruce’s birthday gift to himself—the inclusion of “Sweet Little Sixteen”—is more



rewarding. Other highlights are the opening “High School Confidential,” the inclusion of “The Fever,” and a second night of the “Incident”/“Rosalita” segue.

Not only did JEMS locate a materially better audio recording for September 20, they were also able to find a much better video source from the same show, which they released in conjunction with BruceVideos. This new *Live in Passaic* DVD is still in black and white, but a lot of work obviously went in to making the picture much crisper than what had previously circulated. And, yes, the new soundboard source was used as the soundtrack to the video, making this one a perfect package.

Those ’78 shows weren’t the only upgrades for which JEMS was responsible. Over the years, there have been no fewer than three different releases of the February 5, 1975, show from the Main Point outside Philadelphia, which was broadcast on a delay on WMMR. The Great Dane MastersPlus version of *The Saint, the Incident, and the Main Point Shuffle*, released in the early ’90s, utilized a pre-FM source for the first 80 minutes or so, easily making it the single best-sounding recording of any pre-Darkness show at the time. The last 70 minutes, though, were still sourced from a recording of the radio broadcast, which, while clear, was rife with clicks caused by a limiter/leveler utilized by the radio station on its signal. Subsequent releases found the second half of the show so processed and EQed in attempts to match the first half that it sounded harsh and unnatural.

In summer 2011, JEMS torrented a recording of the second half of the show sourced from a reel-to-reel master tape as recorded by a “home taping enthusiast” (as per the liner notes) and then digitally transferred and “speed-corrected, de-clicked, phase-corrected, and ever-so-lightly mastered” to get the most out of the recording. The artifacts of the broadcast limiter, while still present, have been reduced tremendously; the final results often approach the pre-FM source in quality. Fans of this show—everybody, in other words—should track this one down ASAP.

The next upgrade courtesy of JEMS is another legendary show that should be familiar to most Bruce fans. The final night of the second 1976 tour, November 4 from the Palladium in New York, had long been avail-



able from a soundboard source, but the quality deteriorated in the final third of the show, starting around "Jungleland." JEMS was able to locate a very low generation cassette of the show, and while this new source was not an improvement on the first two-thirds of the show, it was a significant upgrade on the last third. So using the KBMKeefer version of this show (*A Streak of Light Through the Tunnel*) as a base, JEMS released just the second disc of the show (sans the "bonus tracks" from *Streak of Light*) using the new, much improved source. Previous releases of this show—including two silver-disc releases and *Streak of Light*—had a challenge in making the encores sound as good as the main set, resulting in over-processing of the audio. The new JEMS version sounds incredibly natural, uncompressed, and simply excellent. The November 4, 1976, show was always a standout, and the encores were a major part of that, as they feature Ronnie Spector joining the band for three of her classics as well as a rare performance of the Animals' "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."

The sixth upgrade courtesy of JEMS is a fresh transfer of the legendary *The Ties That Bind*, the unreleased 1979 album that first surfaced on CD in the early 1990s. As the story goes, the reels of that album—already compiled into a running order—were discovered at a southern California "swap meet," and the sound quality on the resulting bootleg disc was as close to official-release quality as you could hope to find. According to the liner notes for the fresh transfer, however, those behind the original disc "always knew it could sound even better," so they went back to the reels for a second transfer nearly 20 years later, utilizing top of the line equipment. The new transfer was tormented in both high-resolution 24 bit/96 kHz and regular CD audio.

It is understandable if you find yourself asking, "What could be improved on that disc?" As the liner notes continue, "The stereo separation is improved, the highs higher and the lows lower," and the hiss in the opening of "Stolen Car" has been removed entirely. Technically, there is only one song on the disc that hasn't been officially released—"Cindy," a playful take on unrequited love—but most of the songs on this disc differ from their officially released counterparts: "You Can Look" is the rockabilly arrangement of the song; "The Price You Pay" features an alternate verse; "(To) Be True" has double-tracked vocals; and even the title track is a slightly different take than the one that led off *The River*. And, of course, there's the fact that these versions sound just flat-out better and warmer than the officially released *The River* album. If there were ever an argument as to why Bruce's back catalog should be remastered, this is it.

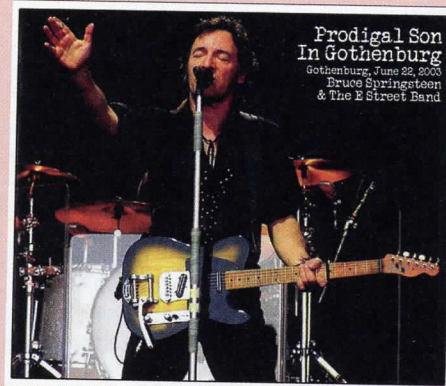
Not just sticking to the '70s, JEMS also released recordings from the October 17 and 19, 1984, shows from Tacoma, WA (the second of which was considered to be one of the hottest shows of 1984 in these very pages at the time). Both recordings were from previously-uncirculated sources with a closeness and

crispness that places them in the "second tier" of Born in the U.S.A. tour recordings, with the second night being a notch better than the first. The tapes were not perfect, though, as some channel problems meant half a dozen songs from each night were in mono, which required additional mastering to match the rest of the recording. The performance on the first night was solid, even as Bruce was coming down with some kind of ailment (due to the "Tacoma Aroma"?), and the set list was pretty standard for the fall '84 leg. The second night was postponed for a day due to the aforementioned ailment, and it yielded the most significant set list shake-up up to that point of Bruce's career: Bruce dropped "Rosalita" from the show, instead playing "Born to Run" to close out the second set. But, as the liner notes for the release say, "there's so much more to this show than just what wasn't played," as a fantastic first encore featured a one-two punch of "Street Fighting Man" and "Wooly Bully," plus "Follow That Dream" kicking off the second encore.

Darkness tour enthusiasts should be sure to track down the previously uncirculated recording of the opening night of the '78 tour from Buffalo, NY. The first set sounds slightly muted, but the second set and encores are nice and bright, and both sets are an improvement over what had previously been available. As any Darkness-phile will tell you, the May 23 show included the only live full-band performance of "The Promise"—at least for 32-and-a-half-years.

The new silver disc label Social Graces, which was responsible for several "soundboard" (although more likely wireless) recordings from 2009, is back with more. First off is a four-disc set comprised of both closed and open rehearsals for the 2009 tour from Convention Hall in Asbury Park. The open rehearsal is the March 23, 2009, show which found Bruce starting to integrate the new material from *Working on a Dream* into the live show. Performances of the new material were rough, and the recording would benefit from some ambient audience sound, but the sound quality is otherwise excellent.

The closed rehearsal is from March 18, 2009, also from Convention Hall in Asbury, and finds Bruce and the band working on six songs from the new album—all of which were played on the tour—plus two E Street classics and "Johnny 99." The main highlights of this set are the multiple takes of "I Ain't Got No Home" and two run-throughs of Jimmy Cliff's "Suffering in the Land," which Bruce had obviously envisioned to be included in the "Recession Pack." With a reggae feel, "Suffering in the Land" sounds very much like "Love of the Common People" as performed towards the end of the Seeger Sessions tour. Like most rehearsal recordings, it's a fascinating listen, especially to hear how Bruce communicates with the band while working up a new song, but it's not something that warrants repeat listens.



Social Graces also recently released a "soundboard"/wireless recording of the June 22, 2003, show from Gothenburg, Sweden, previously captured by Crystal Cat in an excellent audience recording titled *Midsummer Second Night*. On the Social Graces release, Bruce's vocals are way up in the mix with some harsh sibilance at times, but the rest of the mix is even and mostly smooth. A lack of audience noise gives it a sterile feel, but the very talented Prodigal Son mixed an audience recording (most likely Crystal Cat's) with the new wireless release and came up with a great mix. Titled *Prodigal Son in Gothenburg*, this matrix recording uses the audience source to eliminate most of the flaws of the wireless, and the ambiance is perfect.

A friend of this column pointed out that in the discussion of wireless recordings from the Working on a Dream tour in the last issue, we neglected to include the *River* show from November 8, 2009, at Madison Square Garden in New York City. When this one first popped on the torrent sites, it immediately shot to the top of the list of 2009 tour recordings, and with good reason: the wireless recording was seamlessly blended with an audience source to create as close to a soundboard as we may ever get. The show itself was deemed legendary at the time, as Bruce and the Band absolutely nailed the album performance.

Before closing the books on the Reunion Era (1999-2009), "Flynn" and JEMS took one last look with a six-disc compilation focusing on Springsteen originals performed sparsely on the E Street Band tours throughout that span. With 280 different songs performed by Bruce and the band over the four full tours (excluding Vote for Change), including many one-off covers courtesy of the "Stump the Band" portion of recent tours, it can be easy to overlook the songs in Bruce's own catalog that received only a few—sometimes even just one—outings over the course of the decade. Some performances are rough, such as "Let's Be Friends" from Hartford 9/16/2003 or "Crush On You" from Richmond 8/18/2008, and some are pretty much perfect, like "Across the Border" from Giants Stadium 8/30/2003 or "Trouble River" from the Continental Airlines Arena 8/1/1999, but to hear these rare performances in one place reminds us just how special the decade was. 🍷

Next: 2012 *Wrecking Ball* tour recordings

Between the lengthy Wrecking Ball tour and uncovered treasures, it's been a busy time for fan-based recordings.

The first U.S. leg of the Wrecking Ball tour in the spring of 2012 was all but completely documented. While a recording of the Cleveland show from April 17 has yet to circulate (if one even exists), the rest of the leg is represented in fine fashion, making it difficult to narrow down to even just a handful of must-haves based on sound quality alone. With Bruce playing a wide selection of material, especially for early in a tour, selecting "best recordings" really comes down to setlist preferences. Still, we can single out some of the more shining examples.

Travitz and his high-end Schoeps microphones (which make for a very warm recording) represented Philly quite well, capturing both shows in that city in excellent quality. Bruce brought out the Philadelphia specials each night, with "Seaside Bar Song" and "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?" played the first night and "Thundercrack" and "Kitty's Back" coming out the second.

Washington, D.C. didn't get fooled on April 1, as Bruce delivered an intense set that featured the tour debut of "Adam Raised a Cain" and the only full-band performance of "The Promise" on the whole tour. "Trapped" and "American Skin" took the intensity up a notch, while "Seaside Bar Song" and "Bus Stop" provided the fun. Hobbes' excellent recording is easily a contender for best of the first leg.

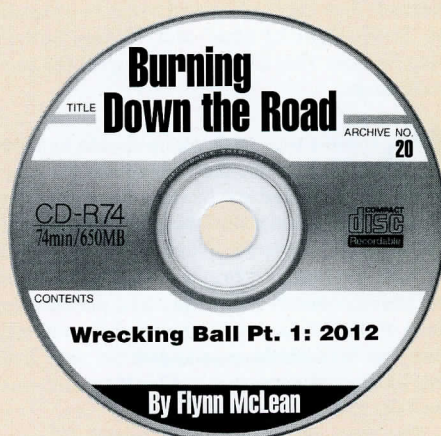
The shows in Buffalo and Albany (April 13 and 16, respectively) inspired some compelling setlist nuggets: "Rendezvous" and "Mountain of Love" in Buffalo, along with a spontaneous performance of "Buffalo Gals" inspired by the show's walk-on music; and in Albany three nights later, a gorgeous acoustic performance of "Janey, Don't You Lose Heart." Bakerstuff, who has been churning out great recordings for over a decade now, was on hand to pull down each show. In addition to these two, Bakerstuff also delivered excellent recordings of the May 2 show in Newark and April 4 at the Meadowlands.

The most unusual show, at least in terms of setlist, was Bruce's return to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival on April 29. Three regulars from the 2006 Sessions Band tour—"O Mary," "Poor Man," and "Pay Me"—made their E Street Band debuts, while another, "We Shall Overcome," was seamlessly and beautifully woven into "Rocky Ground." Additionally, New Orleans native Dr. John came out and fronted the E Street Band for "Something You Got." Bill Floyd walked out of the fairgrounds with an excellent recording, although a capture from jefft, which spawned two remasters, wasn't too shabby, either.

Moving on to Europe in mid-May, the tour continued to be followed by talented and generous tapers. Zimmy21 was on-hand at the May 17 show in Barcelona—aka The Night of "Prove It" '78—and his recording perfectly captured the joy of the Spanish audience without the music being overwhelmed by same.

Zimmy21 was also in the house on July 5 in Paris. That concert and Zimmy21's recording are both candidates for best-of-the-tour honors. The setlist speaks for itself, with Bruce playing six songs before "We Take Care of Our Own" and delivering a unique and sublime segue from "Incident on 57th Street" into "Because the Night." Zimmy21 was also responsible for a high-quality recording of the June 7 show in Milan, which may have been the starting point for realistic hopes that Bruce could play a genuine four-hour show.

July 2012 will go down as a high point of Bruce's career, and should there be any doubt, we have the recordings to prove it. In addition to the aforementioned July 5 concert in Paris, there was "The Night They Pulled the Plug on the Boss and The Beatle," the infamous Hard Rock Calling show in England on July 14, which was already a solid show before



the special guests. Crystal Cat released this one on silver discs, titled *London Killing the Power Night*, utilizing what appears to be some kind of wireless feed mixed with an audience source, making for an excellent if overly compressed recording.

Godfather got into the action with a quality release from the July 21 show in Oslo, titled *Beneath a Peaceful Sky*. A very clear, upfront, and sharp recording with an attractive setlist—including the shamefully underplayed "Ain't Good Enough For You," a nice double-shot of *Darkness* rockers with "Streets of Fire" and "Prove It All Night" (sans '78 intro), and a rare European performance of "Rocky Ground"—make this one worth tracking down.

The July 23 and 24 shows in Bergen, Norway, both recorded by Ballerusk, also deserve mention. Both nights are very clear and close, with an excellent mixture of old and new material including the tour debuts of "This Depression" and "You've Got It." Each show opened with an acoustic song not normally performed in that vein: "Who'll Stop the Rain" on the first night, "Long Walk Home" the second.

With the tour carrying so much momentum, it wasn't a surprise when the two shows in Gothenburg, Sweden, on July 27 and 28 became instant classics. While Kokomo's

recording of the first night is listenable if less-than-stellar, Crystal Cat's release of the second is on the short list for best recording of 2012. For *Gothenburg Second Wrecking Ball Night*, the transparent tabby was again able to utilize a wireless feed and mix it with an audience source for a breathtaking recording. The setlist, of course, was epic in every sense of the word, with "Lost in the Flood," "Saint in the City," "Frankie," and an emotional "Jungleland."

And then we have "The Night When the Legend Became Fact," the European tour closer in Helsinki, Finland, when Bruce cleared the four-hour mark—and that didn't even include the five-song pre-show acoustic set. The recording, a team effort by tootai the taper and Ev2 the masterer, is solid if not spectacular. The only tour performance of "Back in Your Arms" adds some weight to this one, not to mention an encore that included an acoustic "I Don't Wanna Go Home" (although one has to think this line-up of the augmented E Street Band would totally nail a full-band take).

A two-week break between Finland and Fenway didn't diminish the tour's momentum, with the second Boston show on August 15 earning consideration for one of the best of the tour. Fortunately for us, Bakerstuff was in the house (er, the Park) to capture the show for those of us who couldn't be there, and his recording is worthy of the show—which is saying a lot. Bakerstuff also nabbed top-notch recordings of the August 29 Vernon Downs show, the September 22 (into 23) show at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, and the Halloween show in Rochester on the subsequent arena leg.

Nearly every U.S. stadium show from that late-summer stretch spawned an excellent recording, with many of them utilizing high-end Schoeps mics. Travitz nailed the two Labor Day weekend shows in Philly with such mics, and Soomlos returned the favor at both shows in Chicago's Wrigley Field a week later.

In addition to Bakerstuff's recording of the last night of the Meadowlands stand, the penultimate—and some would say best—show on September 21 was recorded by SCB and is definitely a must-download. From the wild and loose "Living on the Edge of the World" to the transcendent coupling of "Incident" into "Rosalita" to close out the main set, every ounce of fun is present in SCB's recording.

The final leg of 2012, when Wrecking Ball shows moved back indoors in October, was also represented in fine fashion on the recordings front. One of the best was from just the third show of the leg in Charlottesville, VA, on October 23, where lp20 pulled down a stunning recording. The show wasn't shabby, either, with "Seaside Bar Song" and the ultra-rare "Give the Girl a Kiss," complete with a humorous intro from Bruce.

We have not one but two excellent recordings of the show two nights later in Hartford, CT, courtesy of Hobbes and Bossman284. Hobbes had some problems early in the show,

but Bossman284 was there to fill in the blanks. Bruce was in a B-side kind of mood, opening with "Held Up Without a Gun" and later playing a killer "Pink Cadillac," complete with the horns adding a sweet blues riff. "Kitty's Back" rocked the house, too.

The most interesting and thematically appropriate set list of the tour was the November 15 show in Omaha, NE, where Bruce included more than half of the songs from the *Nebraska* album. While "Atlantic City" and "Johnny 99" have been regulars for several years now, and "Open All Night" has been given the big band treatment by both the Sessions and the E Street Bands, "State Trooper" and "Highway Patrolman" made their first and only appearances in an E Street show since 1985. The show opened with the Magic tour version of "Reason to Believe," another tour debut (repeated only once thereafter, the following month). Skybird's excellent recording of this one does right by the setlist and performance. Skybird also nailed the November 30 show in Oakland, another one worth tracking down, if only for the full band "Devils & Dust" and another amazing "Kitty's Back."

Taper DGB and masterer Ev2 collaborated on an excellent presentation of the November 26 show in Vancouver, Canada. In fact, it was good enough for the silver bootleg label Godfather Records to "borrow" as their source for a release. This show featured an unusual encore combination of "Racing in the Street" into "Radio Nowhere."

And old friend JB made sure the last two nights of the 2012 tour (the Mexico City and 12/12/12 shows notwithstanding) were represented in fine form. The December 4 show in Anaheim served as a preview of the Australia leg in early 2013 with Tom Morello onstage for much of the show. "Long Time Comin'" made its one-and-only appearance on the tour in an acoustic arrangement (it's another song at which the band deserves to take a crack as well), and Mike Ness joined in on the Social Distortion song "Bad Luck" as he did in 2009. The show two nights later in Glendale, AZ, long slated as the 2012 tour-ender, was chock full of rarities including an opening "Surprise Surprise" in a solo-acoustic arrangement and a solo-piano "Incident on 57th Street." Other than YouTube clips, any recordings from Mexico City have yet to circulate.

In addition to the full slate of recordings from the Wrecking Ball tour, things were also quite busy on the archival side as well. First off, remember that amazing St. Louis show from the end of the Magic tour? Well, even though the audience recordings of that one were pretty good, Ev2 was given access (by an anonymous benefactor) to a treasure trove of wireless feeds from that show, and he mixed them all together to get one amazing recording that does justice to that monumental night (August 23, 2008). No need to go into setlist or performance details; suffice it to say that this one is an absolute must-have.

Second, the team at JEMS has been working overtime to bring the collecting community upgrades of some legendary shows as well as some never-before-circulated recordings.

The four shows in Boston at the end of the "Lawsuit Tour" in March 1977 have long been considered among the most passionate and



driven performances of Bruce's career. While recordings of all four shows have long circulated, JEMS worked with original taper Steve Hopkins to access the master recordings of each show and transfer them with utmost care. These new transfers just jump out of the speakers and grab you in a way that previous remasters of these same recordings (albeit not from the masters), no matter how good, did not. If it's been a while since you've listened to one of these shows, hearing the 2012 transfers is almost like hearing them for the first time. The instrument separation and clarity is breathtaking. Put these recordings ahead of anything from 2012. In addition to the four shows from 1977, JEMS also worked with Hopkins to make available his master recordings of the two shows from December 2 and 3, 1975, also in Boston.

JEMS also partnered with two other tapers/collectors who had some intriguing nuggets in their vaults. "The Big A" loaned two previously uncirculated recordings to JEMS for a transfer that utilized top-notch equipment to get the best possible results. The first such recording is from September 22, 1974, which was an outdoor performance at Kean College in Union, NJ. What makes this recording notable is that it is now the earliest known document of a show featuring new drummer Max Weinberg and new pianist Roy Bittan. The encores included a song that has had at least three different titles over the years: "A Night Like This," which would turn into "A Love So Fine" just a few weeks later, and finally "So Young and In Love" when released on *Tracks* in 1998.

The second previously uncirculated recording brought about by the partnership of The Big A and JEMS is from a show at the Tower Theater in Philadelphia on November 1, 1974. With a few more weeks under their belt, the new configuration of the E Street Band, which includes Suki Lahav at this point, is jelling

quite well. In addition to three songs from the still-in-progress *Born to Run* album, highlights from this show include a transcendent "New York City Serenade" and the last known recording of Ben E. King's "Spanish Harlem." The sound quality is only slightly above average for the era, but the uniqueness of this show more than compensates.

The second taper/collector to share their vault with JEMS is known simply as "ER," and, again, several compelling recordings were unearthed in the alliance. At the top of the list is a previously uncirculated recording of the March 28, 1976 show from Duke University, in Durham, NC, making this the earliest document of the Chicken Scratch Tour. In addition to being one of the few known recordings from the era to feature all eight tracks from *Born to Run*, this show also contained a rare "Blinded By the Light" as well as the first known performance of "Raise Your Hand." This recording is not the master, but a very low generation copy; the sound quality is crisp and clear.

A second recording new to the collecting pool courtesy of ER is the December 17, 1975 show in Buffalo, NY. Again, while not from the master (the release notes speculate the source is second-generation cassettes), the sound quality is above average for a '75 audience recording. The setlist is relatively standard for that part of the tour, with a solo piano "Thunder Road" to open the show, and an encore that included "Santa Claus," the "Detroit Medley," and a solo piano "For You." However, the tape ran out with about a minute left in "For You," so the end of that song as well as the presumed closer "Quarter to Three" are missing. The ER Archives also provided an upgrade of the show from the previous night in Oswego, NY.

Two (thus far, anyway) soundboards in the ER vaults proved to be upgrades over circulating versions: the legendary "bomb scare" show on October 2, 1975 in Milwaukee, WI, and the April 7, 1976 show from the Allen Theater in Cleveland. The soundboard recording of the bomb scare show has always been one of the better tapes of the era, but this new version is indeed a noticeable upgrade, with a stronger lower end and a crisper high end. The pre-bomb scare portion of the show, from an audience source, was also included in the JEMS release, although it's still just as borderline-unlistenable as ever.

JEMS hopes the ER-sourced recording of the April 7, 1976 show gives that particular show more respect amongst fans, as this upgrade is indeed a material one, with a fuller sound than previous releases. The setlist is unusual for that era as well, with a nice one-two punch of "Incident on 57th Street" into "Frankie" and a powerful *Greetings* three-pack of "Growin' Up," "Saint in the City," and the briefly-resurrected "Blinded By the Light." There are a couple of cuts, most notably on "Incident," but that's a small price to pay for such an excellent document. 🐾

Next issue: 2013 *Wrecking Ball* tour recordings

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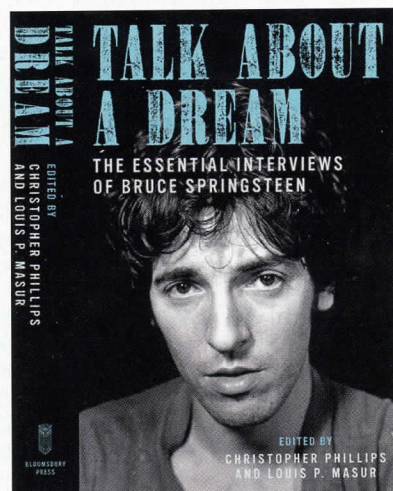
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